



**“BOYS TO MEN”: Negotiating hegemonic masculinity by using dance as a mechanism to explore the performativity of boyhood into manhood within (KwaZulu-Natal) Hilton College Grade 11 (2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015) Dramatic Arts learners.**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the MA Coursework in Drama and Performance Studies by**

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**Ethical Clearance Protocol Number: HSS/1042/014M**

**Supervisor: Lliane Loots**

**Discipline: Drama and Performance Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban**

**2015**

## **DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM**

I, JOSLYN ANN COX (Student number: 207504135) declare that

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signed:

Date: 30 November 2015

# Acknowledgements

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I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Lliane Loots for her exceptional leadership and guidance through the process of writing this dissertation. Her expertise and knowledge has been invaluable and I am sincerely grateful for her assistance. Thanks too to the University of KwaZulu Natal for their financial assistance towards my studies.

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Thanks to Marianthe Stella Smart for her assistance in transcribing the recorded interviews.

Finally, thanks go also to my parents and fiancé, Oscar Anderson, for their unending support in this journey.

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation:

.....  
Ms. L. Loots

# UKZN Ethical Clearance Letter

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18 September 2014

Ms Joslyn Ann Cox 207504135  
School of Arts  
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Cox

Protocol reference number: HSS/1042/014M

Project title: "Boys to Men": Negotiating hegemonic masculinity by using dance as a mechanism to explore the performativity of boyhood into manhood within (KwaZulu-Natal) Hilton College Grade 11 (2012, 2013 and 2014) Dramatic Arts learners

#### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application dated 14 July 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr Ullane Loots  
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# Abstract

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This dissertation will explore the performativity of gender and sexuality amongst adolescent males (16 to 18 years of age) from within the context of the subject specificity of the Dramatic Arts classroom at Hilton College (KZN), with a primary focus on dance. This will be done through interrogating and examining the way in which dance performance practices (as a site of high school learning and education) can function as a transgressive space in which young adolescent South African men are given the opportunity to engage and critically consider and/or reconsider their own *masculinities* as social/cultural constructions.

Hilton College is a private all-boys full-time boarding school, accommodating boys from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Most of the pupils are from economically privileged backgrounds; however, there are some who attend the school through scholarships and/or sponsorship. This is a qualitative research project, and the process of working with my Grade 11 Dramatic Arts students at Hilton College and their creation of choreography for performance will serve as the case study. In my personal experience of the rehearsal process for *FUNK* in past years I was inspired to investigate the boys' personal involvement and the underlying issues around their constructions/ideas of masculinity that were evidenced in the rehearsal process. One of the intentions of the project was that through the boys' involvement in this process they may be offered the opportunity to (re)consider their often narrow and excluding ideas of masculinity, within the context of their own educational and deeply paternalistic schooling environment. The project is participatory action research, as I was involved in observing and engaging with the pupils as they worked through the creation of the piece. It is also ethnographic as I am immersed in the culture of the school. I know the pupils well and it is a safe environment for them to be honest about their opinions and experiences.

The participants in the study are the 13 boys in the 2014 Drama class at Hilton College. The class is mixed race, of mixed academic ability and the students are between the ages of 16 and 18. The case study entailed a number of one-on-one interviews with the pupils at the end of the project, as well as various discussions which occurred throughout their involvement. The interviews included questions around Hilton College, the participants' masculinity, sport at the school, Drama, Arts and Culture and their involvement in *FUNK* 2014.

This research interrogates the assumptions and stereotypes that are to be found in the context of a private all-boys boarding school around dance in particular, and how this affects the way in which the boys' own masculinity is perceived. One of the intentions in this research study was that the students' involvement in a

mediated dance performance might change their perceptions around dance and themselves as dancing active young men through their exposure to this *FUNK* project.

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# Introduction

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This dissertation will explore the performativity of gender and sexuality amongst adolescent males (16 to 18 years of age) from within the context of the subject specificity of the Dramatic Arts classroom at Hilton College (KZN), with a primary focus on dance. The process involved interrogating and examining the way in which dance performance practices (as a site of high school learning and education) can function as a transgressive<sup>1</sup> space in which young adolescent South African men are given the opportunity to engage and critically consider and/or reconsider their own *masculinities* as social/cultural constructions. The research interrogates the assumptions and stereotypes that are to be found in the context of a private all-boys boarding school around dance in particular, and how this affects the way in which boys' own masculinity is perceived.

Hilton College is a private all-boys full-time boarding school, accommodating boys from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Most of the pupils are from economically privileged backgrounds; however, there are some who attend the school through scholarships and/or sponsorship. The school prides itself on its ethos. The school's vision is "to be regarded by pupils, staff, parents, competitors and educationalists - prospective, current and past - as Africa's best boys' boarding school, ranking among the best in the world"<sup>2</sup>.

The concept of hegemony is fundamental to this research, and not only from the perspective of masculinity. Private schooling in South Africa is generally deeply rooted in traditional, colonial ideals which are based on hegemonic principles. The idea of using dance as a mechanism for young males to reconsider their masculinity challenges these norms and the culture of these schools does not necessarily promote this challenging and grappling of norms or going against that which is hegemonic.

I am employed at Hilton College as a full-time staff member in both the Drama and English departments. My involvement as a young female teacher in a school such as Hilton College allows for an informed exploration of the way that these young men function daily. As a Drama teacher I am required to cover a module in Dance or Physical Theatre. In 2012, I choreographed a dance piece with the Grade 11s for a dance programme entitled *FUNK*. Originally *Millennium FUNK*, *FUNK* is a programme of dance pieces performed by high school students

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<sup>1</sup> The Oxford Dictionary defines 'transgressive' as "relating to art or literature in which orthodox moral, social, and artistic boundaries are challenged by the representation of unconventional behaviour and the use of experimental forms" (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/transgressive>) [Accessed 01/10/2015]

<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.hiltoncollege.com/mission-and-values.html>). [Accessed 29 April 2015]

from the Pietermaritzburg and Midlands area. Each school cast is limited to a maximum of 12 performers and they are required to create a choreography (no longer than 5 minutes in duration), which ultimately compiles a shared evening in dance performance. In 2012 I made the decision to use *FUNK* as an annual Grade 11 Dramatic Arts project. In working with the learners both in 2012 and 2013, I was intrigued by the way in which these young men (aged 16 to 18) engaged their own sense of self in the process of creating the dance work. I was inspired to investigate their personal involvement and the underlying issues around their constructions of masculinity that were evidenced in the rehearsal process. The choreography that was created with the Grade 11 class of 2014, became the primary case study on which this dissertation is based.

In her book *To Dance Is Human* (1987), Judith Lynne Hanna suggests that any human being can dance, and to dance is an inborn human activity. Hanna suggests that “to explore dance in some of its complexity as human thought, feeling and action is to explore the nature of being human: such is the challenge” (Hanna, 1987: x). Dance, seen in this light, might therefore be used as a type of go-between; a discipline/methodology that allows for an embodied enquiry into self. Articulating dance in this way, I will argue, encourages an enquiry by the participants into thinking about themselves as boys and men. Although the class created a dance performance work that was performed for an audience, the *process* of creating and making is, for my study, of greater importance. It is the way in which the boys experienced the process of creating the work that provided fertile ground for interrogating issues around boyhood and manhood, and the constructions of their own masculinities within the context of dance.

Though this research may not be completely new, it is adding to a growing lexicon of gender studies<sup>3</sup> and, more specifically, studies around masculinity in adolescent males in the South African school environment. Research has been done around the way in which adolescent males negotiate their masculinity; however, I hope to provide some suggestions around how dance may function as a platform for these boys to consider masculinity within the microcosm of their schooling environment in 21<sup>st</sup> Century post-apartheid South Africa. As far as the dance aspect is concerned, a great deal of research has been done around females and their involvement in dance, or around professional male dancers and issues around sexuality within this field. Some

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<sup>3</sup> There is literature which has been written about this topic by writers such as Doug Risner, Sue Stinson, Edward Warburton and David Spurgeon. Although these writers have contributed to the foundational literature around this topic, they are not South African and their research is not focused within the specific microcosm of the South African schooling system. Their writing is therefore relevant, however, it is hoped that this dissertation may shed light on the specific field of adolescent masculinity within the South African school environment.

research has been done around adolescent male dancers and this research aims to shed some light on the idea of masculinity and/in dance within the specific environment of South African education.

As previously discussed, in interrogating the way in which adolescent males negotiate their (hegemonic) masculinity in a private all-boys boarding environment, the fact that Hilton College places great emphasis on colonial ideals such as good manners, chivalry and gentlemanly behaviour cannot be overlooked. The first principal of the College, Reverend William Orde Newnham, stated that “his first and greatest desire was that ‘Hilton boys’ should be synonymous with ‘gentlemen’ in the very best sense of the term, a boy who was honest and upright and true as steel” (Morrell, 2001: 52-3). It is deeply embedded in the ethos and vision of the College, and this has been so since the school was established and the connection between being a ‘man’ and being a ‘gentleman’ is strong. The work done in this project therefore allowed the boys an intermediary space in which they could look at themselves in a different light, question and/or challenge these norms, and examine the way in which the school (and hence their place in a very specifically constructed society) has defined how they should behave.

This is a qualitative research project with a case study as the primary focus for the research. The process of working with my Grade 11 Dramatic Arts students at Hilton College and their creation of a choreography for performance serves as the case study. The specific group of students used were the 2014 Grade 11 class, however, this has been an ongoing project in which I have explored the FUNK creation process for four years in total (hence the inclusion of this information in the title of this thesis). The project is participatory action research, as I was involved in observing and engaging with the pupils as they worked through the creation of the piece. It is also ethnographic research, which can be defined as follows:

Ethnographic research usually involves observing target users in their natural, real-world setting... The aim is to gather insight into how people live [and] what they do. Ethnographic research relies on techniques such as observation... contextual interviews, and analysis of artefacts.<sup>4</sup>

I am immersed in the culture of the school, I know the pupils well and it is a safe and familiar environment for them to be honest and open with their opinions.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/user-centred-design/user-research/ethnographic-research.html> [Accessed 15 September 2015]

Although the creation of the piece is the primary focus of the research, the boys also engaged in a number of other projects in order to broaden their knowledge and understanding of dance within their academic module in Drama in Term 2. These include:

- Workshops in physical theatre, ballet, ballroom/Latin-American dance and contemporary dance
- Exposure to dance in performance in a professional setting as an excursion
- Engaging in a theoretical research project around a style of dance or a well-known choreographer

Their engagement in these activities informed their understanding of the vast spectrum of dance on some level as a foundation for their own involvement in their dance project. The boys who participated in the study are the 13 students in the 2014 Drama class at Hilton College, the current Grade 12 class. The students range between the ages of 16 and 18. The class is mixed race, mixed academic ability, and features boys with varying talents and strengths.

The case study involved individual/one-on-one interviews with the pupils after the completion of the project. The pupils were aware from the very beginning that they would be involved in creating the choreographic work as it functions as an aspect of their academic work for Grade 11 Dramatic Arts. They were also told that, although their involvement in the work was not optional, they could volunteer to be a part of the research and it was not compulsory. All students in the class elected to be involved in the research. The interview questions are attached as Appendix A and span across a number of topics related to the project and the boys themselves as Hilton College learners. The pupils performed their *FUNK* choreography to paying audiences at the Hilton College Theatre in May of 2014. They performed four times and there is a finale at the end of each performance which is a group choreography performed by the whole cast.

As the case study for this research was developed through dance, the way in which dance has been gendered throughout must also be considered. As previously mentioned, the pupils of Hilton College are aware of what is expected of them as young males growing up in an affluent society. Dance challenges this ideal, as it is generally deemed something that the pupils feel that women should partake in, and not men. Race and culture play a role in this perception, which will also be explored through this project. Although this idea may be true in the greater global context, it is specifically evident in an all-boys boarding school, where sport and physical strength are two fundamental aspects that define their idea of masculinity.

This research will therefore interrogate the assumptions and stereotypes that are to be found in the context of a private all-boys boarding school around dance, and how this affects the way in which the boys' masculinity is perceived. It was likely that the boys would change their perceptions around dance through their exposure to various styles of dance personally, as well as viewing them in performance on stage.

# Chapter 1:

## So what's a Boy? Interrogating adolescent masculinity within the paradigm of higher education (with a focus on South Africa and KZN in particular)

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[Interviewer: Does anyone feel serious pressure to be the man of the household one day?] Well, it's a disappointment if you don't. (Cox, 2015: Learner 4)<sup>5</sup>

Hilton College is a private, all-boys full-time boarding school located in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, accommodating boys from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Most of the pupils are from economically privileged backgrounds; however, there are some who attend the school through scholarships and/or sponsorship. The socio-economic and historical context of this study (and hence dissertation) is foundationally important to the research, as it is a specific microcosm from which the group of boys in question arises.

### **1.1.1. Mission, Values and Ethos**

The school prides itself on its ethos. In describing the school's mission, it is stated that "Hilton College strives to be Africa's leading secondary boarding school for boys, providing a world-class education<sup>6</sup>". The school's vision is "to be regarded by pupils, staff, parents, competitors and educationalists - prospective, current and past - as Africa's best boys' boarding school, ranking among the best in the world"<sup>7</sup>. It is safe to say that the school is considered an environment of economic privilege and the pupils are aware of the honour of attending it. The College is deeply rooted in tradition and a culture of providing top class education. The school's mission is defined as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> Each of the students involved in the case study has been addressed by an alias, namely 'Learner 1/Learner 2' etc., so as to protect the students' anonymity in the study. The aliases were randomly allocated to each of the students that participated, and the methodology of the project is discussed in extensive detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/mission-and-values.html> [Date accessed: 11 May 2014].

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/mission-and-values.html> [Date accessed: 11 May 2014].

Hilton College, a unique world class South African boarding school for boys, strives to provide a balanced educational experience that enables each individual to acquire life skills and embrace Christian values that will allow him to realise his full potential and make a meaningful contribution to society.<sup>8</sup>

The school's values are also important, and it is stated that "We value Courage, Respect, Humility, Compassion, Honesty and Accountability with INTEGRITY in all we do"<sup>9</sup>. Hilton College has recently reworked their vision and mission and has adopted a set of nine Key Focus Areas aligned to the execution of these. They are as follows:

Staff: To build a diverse and dynamic team of professionals who are engaged, passionate and aligned with our Vision, Mission and Values.

Academics: To develop in each boy a love of learning, and a sound work ethic whilst helping him to achieve the results of which he is capable.

Unique Leadership Offering: To be at the forefront of character and servant leadership development.

Pastoral Care: To foster a Christian, values-based community that cares for the individual members of the Hilton College Family and acts on our wider social responsibilities.

Sport: To build in each boy character through participation in team sport whilst striving for excellence in our sports.

Cultural: To encourage creativity, participation in, and an appreciation of the arts through exposure to a range of cultural opportunities.

Financial Sustainability: To operate a business model aligned with our Vision, Mission, Values and Strategy that ensures the long-term viability of Hilton College.

Estate: To utilise our unique estate to develop an appreciation of nature and the need to sustain the natural environment for future generations.

Diversity: To be a truly South African school that embraces, celebrates and reflects diversity.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.1.2. The History of the College**

The Hilton College of today has been built up over a period of over a hundred years.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/mission-and-values.html> [Date accessed: 03 April 2015]

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/mission-and-values.html> [Date accessed: 03 April 2015]

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/mission-and-values.html> (Date accessed: 03 April 2015)

South African education pedagogy academic Robert Morrell (2001) has written extensively around the constructions of what it means to be a man in South Africa and how this impacts on how males interact socially and professionally. Morrell states that during the late 1800s and early 1900s “schools [in colonial Natal] were primarily boarding establishments exclusively for white boys” (Morrell, 2001: 48). He goes on to say that “they drew their pupils from the most affluent sections of the white population”, and makes specific reference to Hilton College and some of its history (Morrell, 2001: 48).

Hilton College places great emphasis on these colonial ideals such as good manners, chivalry and gentlemanly behaviour. The fact that the boys have good manners is of course not necessarily what defines ‘colonialism’, however, the school was founded on these colonial principles and these fundamental blocks are what the boys’ intended and taught behaviour is based on. The first principal of the College, Reverend William Orde Newnham, stated that “his first and greatest desire was that ‘Hilton boys’ should be synonymous with ‘gentlemen’ in the very best sense of the term, a boy who was honest and upright and true as steel” (Morrell, 2001: 52-3). In essence, much of what it means to teach and grow young boys into men in this school environment is encapsulated in this notion of a “gentleman” (Morrell, 2001:52-3). The connection between being a ‘man’ and being a ‘gentleman’ is strong. In questioning the boys around what their perception is of what constitutes a Hilton boy, Learner 10, for example, stated that:

It means to be respectful, well-mannered, to look after your friends, build tight relationships, it’s sort of just... the basic values of what a gentleman is. So you are kind and respectful to everyone else, you don’t swear, you don’t bully anyone else. It is sort of prepping you for society outside.” (Cox, 2015: Learner 10)

It can be said that these characteristics are expected to be upheld at school and when students fail to do so, they are punished accordingly. This is discussed in detail further on.

## **Gender**

The truth of the matter is that nobody really, or naturally, likes to think about gender. Thinking about gender is irritating in the same way thinking about breathing or the beating of our hearts is irritating. We don’t have or acquire a gender; we *are* gendered. In our deepest beings, from the first, we are male or female. When we think about gender, that thinking is gendered. (Hawley, 1993: xvii)

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<sup>11</sup> Note <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/history.html> (Date accessed: 03 April 2015)



Richard Hawley states that “masculinity is best understood as a trajectory. In literature it is described as a journey or quest. A young hero leaves home and hearth and takes off” (Hawley, 1993: 17). The concept of a journey of discovery describes the process of the negotiation of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is a concept first coined by Raewyn Connell (1995). The concept of hegemony refers to “the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life” (Connell, 1995: 77). Hegemonic masculinity can therefore be defined as:

...the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell, 1995: 77)

South Africa in particular remains affected by patriarchy; and Hilton College fits this description. In attempting to expand on what she originally states about masculinity, Connell suggests that

‘Masculinities’ are not the same as ‘men’. To speak of masculinities is to speak about gender relations. Masculinities concern the *position* of men in a gender order. They can be defined as the patterns of practice by which people (both men and women, though predominantly men) engage that position. (Connell, 2010)

Masculinity focuses on the position of men within a gendered society and this sheds some light on the relevance of this theory within the context of the boys at Hilton College. Although there are female staff at the school and the boys do have contact with their families, the College is a primarily male-driven environment. This means that much of their daily life involves contact with other males, be it other boys in their dormitories or boarding houses, or adult staff and sports coaches. All of these aspects contribute directly to the culture of masculinity and the patriarchal foundation on which the school resides. It can also be suggested that the boys’ consistent interaction with other men may reinforce this patriarchal ideology, even merely through the fact that the hierarchy is paternalistic.

This is not to say that they necessarily *choose* this lifestyle for themselves. As they are minors, their parents have an important role to play in deciding which school their children attend. It is, as previously mentioned, a lifestyle which they buy into. When asked what they consider to be a Hilton boy, some of the boys’ responses were quite contradictory. Learner 1 said that:

In my opinion it is to be... like everyone has this perception of the all-rounded individual but I think the actual opinion of it is someone who does well in academics but really well in sport. Culture is sort of pushed aside so

it's a bit of a shame, because it is not seen on the same level as everything else.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 1)

This student's response expresses the idea that there are some areas of the school life that are considered more important than others and that that is what defines you as a Hilton boy which will be discussed in detail further on. On the other hand, Learner 7 stated that:

It means to be proud of being here... doing anything to make your school better, we take a lot of criticism outside, but, being a Hilton boy you have to be selfless, and do what you need to do to get your school up there. We get a lot criticism because its expensive, we get a lot in that we're just rich boys that just don't care about school or anything, just think that our parents will help us in life... if someone from the school does something a lot of people will talk about it. To some people you can see as soon as they ask you and you tell them [what school you go to], they speak to you differently all of a sudden.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

Learner 7 addresses the expectation of the boys (from within the school and society outside of the school) because they attend Hilton College. They are aware that they are/may be perceived differently by the outside world and this can affect how they behave and interact.

In a different perspective on this, Connell dismisses the concept that masculinity is defined by genetics, or that one is born into a certain way of being where sexuality is concerned. She says that

In pop psychology, and a lot of popular belief, masculinity is set in concrete, fixed by the genes or by God, and impossible for women to influence. 'Boys will be boys', 'all men are like that'. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is abundant evidence that boys differ widely, masculinities are multiple, masculinities change in history - and that women have a considerable role in making them, in interaction with boys and men.

(Connell, 2010)

This exposes a different dimension of considering how males (and, for the purpose of this research, adolescent males) define their own masculinity. It is also necessary to mention that this case study features a group of different boys with individual opinions and perceptions. With reference to the above quote, it could be considered that 'masculinity' is a complex and multi-faceted aspect of being male. Connell states that masculinity is changeable. It is not a fixed, definitive aspect of the individual. In saying this, however, although masculinity may be changeable it still holds the power to have authority over – and thus the use of the term – “hegemonic” masculinity, which enables this assertion.

Connell and Messerschmidt say that “masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 836). This substantiates the claim that men are stereotyped in many ways. Richard Hawley states that one can define the modern male “as an accretion of qualities – i.e. dangerous aggression, sexual domination, insensitivity – unacceptable to feminism” (Hawley, 1993:3). Anything ‘feminine’ is therefore regarded as the lesser, and consequently deemed unattractive (except, of course, sexually and as sexual conquest which, in turn, asserts masculinity). Men are often compared to women (in a sense that men should always behave like the dominant male). In the same way, women are also often defined in relation to men which opens the possibility for a great deal of subjectivism. It is through this reciprocal and mutual interplay between men and women that gender stereotypes are reinforced. In questioning the boys around this issue, they stated that society affects their perceptions about masculinity.

There’s too much of a structure. There are some people who don’t believe in putting women first. It depends on the way you were brought up. The only reason we think it’s right [is] because everyone else thinks it’s right... Everyone in the world nearly, everyone in the school. (Cox, 2015: Learner 4).

In discussing work by Wetherell and Edley (1999) around the same topic, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) mention that

Men can dodge among multiple meanings according to their interactional needs. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently, “masculinity” represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 841).

This suggests that masculinity cannot fit a prescribed classification and is not fixed according to each individual, but that males can adapt according to different situations or circumstances. In the context of Hilton College, this may explain how boys choose how they behave in different circumstances often depending on who is around them. For example, it may be suggested that a boy is more likely to try and coax his way out of punishment with, for example, a female teacher using charm and flirtatious manipulation. This would be completely unheard of when dealing with a male staff member; firstly – as male teachers are seldom challenged by students on decisions made, and secondly, because that level of said male teacher’s sensitivity might be frowned upon by the unspoken codes of hegemonic masculinity within the institution.

The idea that this ‘gendered’ behaviour is not constant but ever-changing links to gender theorist and philosopher Judith Butler and her theory of ‘performativity’. Performativity may be explained as the way in

which an individual ‘performs’ their masculinity or femininity, as opposed to gender being primarily determined by the actual sex of the individual. Butler states that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender... identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 2004: 6). Chris Brickell (2003) argues that Butler suggests that through performativity, categories such as male and female, man and woman are realized (Brickell, 2003: 165). This means that it is through the actual *living out* of our gender, so our gender is defined.

In localising this idea around the students at Hilton College, it may be suggested that how they negotiate their own masculinity is greatly influenced by the external factors of the school and the way in which they are, in many ways, forced to behave; particularly with regards to their sporting commitments, their bodies and their chivalry. This is in direct correlation with the previously mentioned assertion that the boys’ perceptions around masculinity and patriarchy are reinforced by their consistent contact with other males (schoolboys and staff) and how this daily reiteration affects their thinking around gender. Judith Butler’s (2007) theory of performativity makes for a strong foundation for the specific area of masculinity within gender. Butler suggests that

In the theatre, one can say, ‘this is just an act,’ and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real... [this] allows strict lines to be drawn between the performance and life.

(Butler in Loxley, 2007: 142)

In relation to this and giving some explanation of the term ‘performativity’, Butler states that:

...to understand identity as a *practice*, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effect of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of life.

(Butler in Kirby, 2006: 44)

Chris Brickell provides an insightful discussion around understanding Butler’s notion of performativity:

Butler suggests that through performativity – the exercise of performatives – categories such as male and female, man and woman are brought into being... The proclamation “it’s a girl!” uttered at birth, for example, is the initiator of a process of “girling” the female subject.

(Brickell, 2003: 165).

When considering masculinity this way, Butler also suggests that gender distinction in itself “presupposes a generalization of the body” (Butler, 1993: 164). Although masculinity is an expansive field, it is the more specific and focused area of adolescent masculinity within gender studies that is to be considered for this dissertation. This is focused even further within the all-boys’ boarding school environment.

## Adolescent Masculinity

Disturbing as the notion may be, manhood may be an illusion... manhood, by which I mean the cultural face of masculine maturity, may be a husk fashioned to contain and to conceal boyhood. Boyhood does not dissipate or go away; men don't grow out of it. (Hawley, 1993: 165)

[Interviewer: What defines your masculinity?] The way you act. If someone's got a gay voice. I don't know how to explain it? It's image. Like if you're not part of the crowd. (Cox, 2015: Learner 13).

Although this dissertation focuses primarily on South African teenage boys, consideration of adolescent masculinity in other parts of the world provides a background for this study. In their text *So What's a Boy? Addressing Issues of Masculinity and Schooling*, Wayne Martino and Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) consider the ways in which young men define themselves within the context of senior schooling across the Australian continent. The study involved interviews with a number of different teenage boys in order to better understand their negotiations of self within their school environment.

In an introductory chapter Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli aim, in a nutshell, to describe the challenges that these boys face on a daily basis. One of the interviewees stated that "boys have to face not looking like a fairy, not being too dumb, not being too smart, every pressure available, fitting in the right groups" (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 4). In discussions with the students who participated in the study for this research, they discussed the way in which they are influenced by their peers.

We all feel influenced by our peers. If someone goes out and gets a new haircut then we all have to go get that haircut. It's [what] society says... and how we look at each other. We are like sheep. (Cox, 2015: Learner 5).

This reiterates the many struggles that adolescents endure throughout this stage of their development into adulthood. In connection with this, Michael Kimmel's text *Guyland* addresses the period during which boys become men. Focused in the United States of America, the text also sheds light on this process. Under the term "The Guy Code", Kimmel writes a list of the top ten qualities that a so-called 'real guy' should demonstrate. They are as follows:

"Boys don't cry"

"It's better to be Mad than Sad"

"Don't get Mad – Get even"

"Take it like a Man"

“He Who has the Most Toys When he Dies, Wins”

“Just Do It”, or “Ride or Die”

“Size Matters”

“I Don’t Stop to Ask for Directions”

“Nice Guys Finish Last”

“It’s All Good”

(Kimmel, 2008: 44)

Kimmel writes that males are becoming more pressured to fit into the parameters of ‘manliness’, and that the period in which they struggle with this most intensely is during their high school years. This also proves that Connell’s (1997) suggestion around the expectation of hegemonic masculinity is felt by boys from an early age. Kimmel says that

The hormonal changes that boys experience during puberty are bewildering enough, and high school adds a new overlay of expectations about proving masculinity, deciphering a pecking order that seems to have its own internal and impenetrable logic, and navigating the relentless domination of jock<sup>12</sup> culture.

(Kimmel, 2008: 70)

Kimmel’s comments in this text are revealing in a sense that they show an insider’s perspective on what adolescent boys value and what they deem to be important. Some of these so-called ‘rules’ may appear to be almost ludicrous in their reduction of outlook and view; however, in the interview process for this project, many of these opinions were confirmed. The abovementioned ‘behavioural code’ also provides some explanation for why boys in the school environment at Hilton College seem to find themselves in all sorts of trouble quite regularly, as they are impulsive and sometimes struggle to make intelligent decisions with a consideration for consequence.

In line with this, it can be suggested that it is easier for boys to fit in, ‘go with the flow’ and not have to endure endless teasing and judgement from their peers than to engage in activities that are possibly less popular. This pertains to the questions around which activities are popular and deemed acceptable and those which are less appealing amongst an adolescent male peer group. Boys are therefore more likely to engage in things that are

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<sup>12</sup> A ‘jock’ is an informal term used to describe “an enthusiastic male athlete or sports fan, especially one with few other interests.” <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/jock#jock-2> [Accessed 12 October 2015]

approved of by their classmates, as opposed to doing things which they may actually enjoy and where they can use their individual talents. This is further mentioned in the discussion/section around boys and sport.

### **Adolescent Sexuality**

The idea of heteronormative masculinity fundamentally affects the ways in which the boys consider themselves and their peers. 'Heteronormative' is a term that was originally coined by Adrienne Rich (1980) in her essay *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. She discusses the idea that "biologically men have only one innate orientation – a sexual one that draws them to women, while women have two innate orientations, sexual toward men and reproductive toward their young." (Rich, 1980: 107). Heteronormative masculinity is therefore the principle that biologically, men should only be paired with women. It also lends itself to various norms which are expected from both males and females respectively. This quote is relevant to this study as it substantiates the idea that heteronormative masculinity is the only acceptable orientation. As previously mentioned, boys are sometimes less likely to engage in activities which are considered less masculine for fear of being considered weaker and not 'manly' enough. These are the heteronormative ideals which are perpetuated by the patriarchy within Hilton College.

In relation to this, French philosopher Michel Foucault suggests that our understanding of what is considered 'normal' is deeply rooted in our history. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli make reference to his work in their text. They discuss how he explains how social relations operate by describing them as "'technologies of the self' involving techniques of self-decipherment and normalising practices" (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 6). In considering this, one is able to successfully analyse "the ways in which adolescent boys learn to monitor and police their sexuality in terms of the proscribing limits of desirable normative heterosexual masculinities" (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 6). It is through these normative heterosexual masculinities that boys are taught and encouraged to fashion their own individual identity. These prescriptive and gendered behaviours may affect the way in which the boys perceive themselves and their masculinity in relation to their social context.

As previously mentioned, within the context of private schooling in particular, the characteristics that are deemed acceptable and normative are of great importance. Students are expected to behave in a certain way that conforms to the school's ethos and values. Foucault's writing around 'subjectification', as quoted by Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, suggests that the mainframe of schools concerns the use of power/knowledge relations which are centred around the body. It is suggested that "it is within institutions, such as the school,

that mechanisms of power are operationalized through specific administrative structures and pedagogical, social and disciplinary practices which are governed by particular norms” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 7). Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli suggest that

It is important for educational work to focus on equipping all boys with capacities for interrogating dualistic forms of rationality and how they are deployed in fashioning masculinities...this also means encouraging boys to embrace diversity. (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 12)

They go on to say that these engendered ‘practices’ are what inform how boys negotiate their masculinity and, with reference to Michel Foucault’s poststructural endeavour, state that “the formation of... identity is understood in terms of the cultural techniques for working on and fashioning the gendered self” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 5). This suggests, once again, therefore that within the context of Hilton College, the boys are influenced largely by the environment in which they find themselves, and the traditions and legacies which they are expected to abide by. They ‘fashion’ their masculinity around these principles. The heterosexual male, as Ramsay Burt suggests is also “sometimes... less able to deal with or express a full range of feelings (including the ‘soft’ emotions that are associated with femininity) than women, black people, gays and others often designated ‘Other’ (Burt, 1995: 18). This further substantiates the value of the Arts for adolescents in the way in which they can assist in the encouragement of sharing and engaging in their own personal opinions and encouraging an environment of sharing and openness, as well as teaching them to “embrace diversity”, as Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli suggest.

### **You have to be strong, big and muscular: Boys, bodies and Masculinities**

[Interviewer: How do you become part of the ‘in-crowd’?] Gym. And A teams. If you play an A team sport then you are classified as a ‘hond’<sup>13</sup>. [Interviewer: Does being masculine have anything to do with the way you treat women?] Usually badly. Like womanizers... They’re like ah I got with this chick, this chick and this chick. I think gyming also has a lot to do with it. (Cox, 2015: Learner 5)

Within the immediate context of Hilton College, working out in the gym has become somewhat of an obsession amongst many of the students. Although boys are encouraged to engage in sport and physical activities, to have a healthy lifestyle and balanced diet, the reasoning behind it is far more complex. “Sport at

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<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/Hondhandbook?s=01> [Accessed 6 October 2015]

The word ‘hond’ is the Afrikaans translation of ‘dog’. It implies that men who treat women disrespectfully are ‘dogs’, but that this is an admirable and inspiring behaviour. It encourages misogyny and sexism against women.



Hilton College is played with pride and passion, with an emphasis above all on developing the qualities and values of good sportsmanship, team participation and leadership.” (Hilton College, 2013). The school’s prospectus illustrates how Hilton College holds sport as an imperative aspect of the holistic education experience that is available. It states that

There is a long and proud tradition of excellence in sport, but importantly we aim to cater for the competence level of each boy, and to provide him with the competition and coaching that is going to ensure that he grows in confidence and enjoys the sport at the level at which he is competing.

(Hilton College, 2014)

Sport (and the amount of time the boys spend in the gym) is connected to the perception that adolescent boys have of their bodies. In the discussion that Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) had with their subjects, many boys spoke openly about how the body is a defining factor in how your masculinity is perceived or whether or not it is called into question. This may come about through the physical appearance of the body, the age of the individual or the activities that they are involved in, particularly those which are extra-curricular/co-curricular. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli state that the masculine body is one that is associated with strength, control and power (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). These are obviously qualities that adolescent males aspire to possess and this underpins their value within their immediate context. They also suggest that “schools can be prime sites where the physical aggressive display of masculinity comes to signify a lack of safety for boys who do not physically ‘measure up’” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 17). In this way they are constantly comparing themselves to one another in the hopes that they will fit within the parameters of the ‘acceptable’ male form.

As previously mentioned, Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli’s study is focused in Australian schools; however, some parallels can be drawn. In interviewing the Hilton boys who participated in this research, many of them reiterated some of what Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli discovered in Australia. One could therefore make the assumption that many of these factors apply to the vast majority of adolescent males; despite their geographical location. Stephen Frosh et al (2002) discuss the findings of interviews that they conducted with adolescent males around the same topic. They state that “attributes such as “hardness”... [and] sporting prowess... remain very influential in determining boys’ popularity and also their views of themselves and others as properly ‘masculine’” (Frosh et al, 2002: 11). The idea of bodily generalisations can also be underpinned by Butler’s idea that:

...what constitutes the limit of the body is never merely material, but that the surface, the skin, is systematically signified by taboos and systematic transgressions [...] the boundaries of the body become [...] the limits of the social. (Butler, 1993: 167).

The physical aspect of the growing male body has developed in a different way over the past few years. The use of performance-enhancing supplements has become a problem amongst young adults in recent times. In an article about this topic, lecturers Brad Humphreys and Jane Ruseski state that “Recent evidence, primarily derived from survey data, suggests that adolescents use drugs in an effort to improve athletic performance and physical appearance.” (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2007: 2). This is a developing issue amongst adolescent males and one which arises often in conversation amongst the pupils at the College as well. The same article mentions that:

The second most popular reason reported for adolescent use of steroids was to improve physical appearance. Adolescents who use steroids to change their physical appearance clearly have different motivations than athletes. (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2007: 3)

It is important to consider this aspect when looking at my own case study of Hilton College, as it appears that not all adolescent males who use steroids wish to do so in order to improve their physical abilities. In some cases it is merely to improve their physical appearance. This is another aspect of adolescence that affects the developing adolescent male in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The greatest concern here may therefore be the societal pressures that these boys feel to fit in and to subscribe to a norm that is forced upon them. Lindsay Clowes (2013) discusses similar aspects of the masculine image in her article *The limits of discourse: Masculinity as vulnerability*. She speaks of a lecture in which she worked with her students in exploring newspaper clippings from South African newspapers about these topics. She discusses the “increasing pressure on South African men to look good through harmful practices of self-styling” (Clowes, 2013: 13). She states that “the ubiquity of men’s violence towards themselves and others might be linked to men’s attempts to live up to normative expectations of patriarchal masculinity” (Clowes, 2013: 13). The relevance of this suggestion to this research is that the concept of so called ‘self-styling’ begins at a young age (13 to 14 years) and continues to become more pertinent as they grow older. In discussing the way in which men have the capacity to self-destruct through this process of trying to ‘fit the bill’ Clowes quotes Ira Horowitz in saying:

When the lives men lead are examined closely... it becomes obvious that by trying to follow the roles proscribed by us by our socialisation, we suffer serious physical, psychological and emotional harm. As a result, we live very pressured lives and, on average, die younger than women; we spend much of our lives feeling like failures and,

because we cannot express those feelings, we often numb them out with alcohol and drugs.

(Horowitz in Clowes, 2013: 16)

It is hoped that through the use of the Arts, and Dance in the context of this research, that the students are encouraged to engage and discuss these aspects of their lives and the expectations that they feel are imposed upon them. It is surely necessary for them to have an outlet in which they feel comfortable to express their opinions so as not to “numb them out with alcohol and drugs”, as Horowitz suggests (Horowitz in Clowes, 2013: 16).

### **Sport and its impact on the boys**

A critical sociology of sport calls for schools to engage with the question: ‘How can physical education be planned for and taught so the centrality of traditional team sports in the curriculum is dislodged and so that it provides opportunities for all boys and girls to explore a variety of more equitable and empowering movement possibilities?’

(Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 257)

[Interviewer: Do you think that playing contact sport such as rugby is in any way connected to how masculine you feel? Personally, no. [Interviewer: Do you think other guys feel like that?] Ja, I think a lot of them do, but rugby’s just another sport to me... that’s a South African view, also. [Interviewer: That masculinity is shown through rugby?] Ja, through rugby... [because] of contact sport and it’s... just very rough and that’s the way men are supposed to be.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 8)

This case study has been conducted within the arena of Drama and, more specifically Dance. It is important to mention at this point that, above all else, dance is a physical practice. The use of the body to express, to communicate, to explore meaning, and to discover is the fundamental basis of dance as an art form. The fact that adolescent boys place such a great emphasis on physical/bodily attributes, fitness and sporting ability is ironic when considering how they perceive dance, particularly as it is mostly considered somewhat effeminate or not ‘manly’ enough.

William Pollack (2000) speaks about how boys connect emotionally through sport in his text *Real Boys’ Voices*. He suggests that “sports activities provide many boys with some of their most emotionally intense experiences” (Pollack, 2000: 274). He addresses the way in which the camaraderie, competition, personal fulfilment and self-worth are, for some, experienced deepest on the sports field. He states that “through sports, boys learn to win and to lose, to celebrate their strengths, to face and accept their limitations and weaknesses” (Pollack, 2000: 274). In some ways sport can be used as an outlet for boys’ emotions and feelings. This links to the previously mentioned idea that “boys don’t cry” (Kimmel, 2008: 44). Martino and

Pallotta-Chiarolli suggest sport allows boys the opportunity to be aggressive and violent without any repercussions. They state that “...within a sport site, ‘violence and harassment’ take on an ‘ambiguous function’ and ambiguous meanings” (Fielder, Messner and Connell in Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 250). Contact sport therefore almost gives the boys a chance to get rid of frustration through physical abuse which is often condoned in the context of the game. Pollack mentions a boy interviewed during his study who stated that “when I get angry about things, I take it out on the football field” (Pollack, 2000: 274).

Hilton College has been involved in contact sport for many years. Contact sport can be defined by the permission of players to connect forcefully with other players on the field. It is stated that along with the taking over of the school by principal Henry Vaughan Ellis in 1887, after whom one of the seven boarding houses is named, came the introduction of rugby to the school<sup>14</sup>. “As a former pupil of Rugby School, Ellis brought much of the rugby tradition to Hilton”<sup>15</sup>. In a similar discussion on the school’s website about the history of the school it is written that “Hilton was the first Natal school to play rugby football, and to Ellis goes most of the credit for Hilton’s early prowess”<sup>16</sup>. In this reference too, it is notable that the expectation of the school’s performance in rugby was established over a hundred years ago. This means that the pressure for the teams to perform on the field even now is enormous and, although other sports are also important at Hilton College, none carry as much weight or social prestige as rugby. A student that Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli interviewed for their study discussed his thoughts around how sports teachers at his school did not show acknowledgement for his achievements in “drama and art” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 258). He states that they “just love all the sportos [boys who play sport] and they don’t have time for anyone else” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 258).

Although this discussion is centred around general involvement in sport, there are also psychological implications to consider. The pressure that the boys feel to participate in contact sport is tangible. The buy-in from the students (whether they play the sport themselves or not) is massive. Not only is the pressure built on a history of tradition amongst the old boys and parents, but it carries through to the present day as well. As previously mentioned, there is a great deal of focus placed on rugby as one of the most valued sports at the College. The social legacy of the sport at Hilton College comes primarily from the focus that the school places on it, but also, the physical dexterity required to play for the First VX and the status that comes along with doing so. It begins from the Form I (Grade 8) year, as the boys are required to learn the names of various

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/history/203-the-history-of-hilton-college.html> [Date accessed: 03 April 2015]

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/history/203-the-history-of-hilton-college.html> [Date accessed: 03 April 2015]

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/history/203-the-history-of-hilton-college.html> [Date accessed: 03 April 2015]

sports captains in that year for their New Boys Test, as part of their initiation into the school. The young boys idolise these seniors. Rugby matches that are played at home are compulsory and all boys are expected to attend as spectators. It also comes along with a great deal of status and admiration; if you can play your way into the First XV, you will inevitably gain the popularity that comes along with it.

Friday nights during rugby season entail a singing of the school war cry 'O Boys of Hilton' in the dining hall after they have eaten dinner. The first hockey team lead in first, followed by the second rugby team and then the first rugby team. The song, written by Hiltonian and ex-Springbok rugby player Bobbie Skinstad, is sung with passion and fervour. Its lyrics include the phrase "and stood against them, our foes in rugby", which reinforces the importance placed on the sport<sup>17</sup>. Masculinity, in the history of Hilton College, is underpinned by great warriors and soldiers who died in battle and gave their lives for their country, representing the College as they did so. It could be suggested that in this current context within the school, rugby and sport have become the new warrior code. Strength, courage and bravery are now measured by one's performance on the sports field.

### **You must be gay if you are studying Drama**

Sociology and gender studies professor Michael Kimmel (2008) provides an in-depth look into the critical developmental years between 16 and 26. Kimmel discusses how masculinity is defined, as well as the fact that boys who are not considered masculine enough are often termed 'gay'. Ramsay Burt suggests that

The cluster of fears associated with homosexuality is sometimes called homophobia. Homophobia is the social mechanism which prohibits or makes fearful the idea of intimate contact or communication with members of the same sex. It is generally argued that homophobia is a mechanism for regulating the behaviour of all men rather than just self-identified homosexuals. It has been proposed that homophobia is an essential characteristic of patriarchal society. (Burt, 1995: 22)

Connell explains that "adolescent boys' peer talk constantly uses sexuality to determine hierarchies: "fag", "slag", and so forth" (Connell, 1996: 219). It is important here to reiterate that 'gay' carries with it a negative connotation within the secondary schooling context, as it is considered in opposition to that of hegemonic masculinity. This does not even necessarily have any connection to a physical or sexual attraction between males, but rather that it insinuates a 'less-than-masculine' perception, which is not widely accepted in the context of the school.

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.hiltoncollege.com/images/stories/oh\\_boys\\_of\\_hilton.mp3](http://www.hiltoncollege.com/images/stories/oh_boys_of_hilton.mp3) [Date accessed: 03 April 2015]

The boys do not really understand the literal connotation behind the term 'gay' and its associated link to the politics and practice of homosexuality. It has become a type of slang reference to anything less than 'masculine' and a way of denoting and othering. This is often met with physical and psychological violence, and homophobic behaviour is also evident. Homophobic behaviour may come across through derogatory comments amongst the boys. For example, if a boy makes a comment about something that he like or enjoys which is not particularly mainstream, another boy may respond with, "That is so gay!" (Cox, 2015: Learner 11). This exposes another dimension of the definition of 'gay', that adolescent boys who participate in creative or artistic mediums are sometimes perceived as less masculine than those who choose to play sport. A binary is thus set up that supports the hegemonic systems of masculinity. This means that sport is at the top of the male list, with drama and arts linked with 'gay' and 'other' at the bottom. This then leads to a situation of undesirability for young boys whose interests and skills might lie in these perceived 'unworthy/unmanly' areas.

Drama is an examinable Grade 12 subject that is offered at Hilton College. Murray Milner, Jr. (2006) addresses some perceptions around students who study Drama in his text *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids*. He states that "drama groups are an especially interesting case...hence the term "drama freaks" or "drama queers" (Milner, 2006: 76). It is also the suggestion that these activities are 'non-athletic' and "for the most part non-aggressive [activities]... [are] defined as "unmanly", an activity for "sissies", or "fags and queers"... it deviates from some of the key norms of the dominant groups in most high schools" (Milner, 2006: 77). As this suggests, many boys face a great deal of judgement from their peers about the choices that they make when it comes to extra-curricular activities and, more importantly, their subject choices. It appears that sport, for one, is generally more revered than any cultural activity. Even within each of these fields there are some sports and some cultural activities that are considered to be less impressive than others.

The use of the term 'gay' is common amongst the Hilton boys. In Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli's research they discuss a boy who "was targeted as gay because he wasn't into sport" (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 251). This may be the perception around boys who opt not to participate in sport but rather to engage in other activities. The connotation is that if you are not playing sport then you are not manly enough.

Within the realm of dance, the fact that 'gayness' is a term used merely to describe the lesser is exceptionally important. In discussion with the participants in my case study, it is clear that the general perception of other males around males who dance is that they are less masculine than those that, for example, play a first team sport. It is also clear that, as Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli suggest, "often these boys who [are] unable to

‘measure up’ physically, [feel] compelled to compensate for this ‘lack’ by overt displays of heterosexuality” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 21). This may also explain the extreme physicality on the sports field, for example. As previously mentioned, taking part in activities which do not epitomise masculinity is not as highly revered by the pupils at Hilton College as those which do.

Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli also state that they were “particularly interested in the effects of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ and how the requirements for boys to display themselves as appropriately heterosexual impacts on the way they fashion and police their masculinities” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 6). They suggest that homophobia plays a role as “a specific technique of self-regulation and surveillance of other boys [and], therefore, is understood as linked to a particular ‘technology of the self’” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 6-7). This is also evident in specific academic subjects and extra-curricular activities at Hilton College that students are involved in. Even where extra-curricular is offered it is still ranked hierarchically from a perspective of how activities define or support hegemonic masculinity. For example, if a boy is to involve himself in a school production, if he has a rehearsal which occurs at the same time as a sports practice, sport will almost always take priority over the Drama production.

Sport is also a compulsory aspect of the boys’ extracurricular activities whereas cultural activities are encouraged, but not compulsory. It is suggested that “those subjects and activities that more closely could be assimilated and modified to emulate normative notions of masculinity [are] considered more appropriate than those that [are] less able to do so and [are] more likely to be constructed as feminine” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 259). One of the students in this Australian study states that in “drama... you can tell that quite a few people are homosexual” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 259). Although this is Australian research, the same issues around heteronormative sexuality are dealt with at Hilton College. Although the arts are most definitely of importance at the school (due primarily to the College’s focus around holistic education), there still appears to be a homophobic stigma around the ‘type’ of boys that choose Drama as a subject, although this is focused less around sexuality and more around academic performance. At Hilton College it is eluded that the boys who choose Drama are the ones who academically were not doing well in other subjects (such as Mathematics and Physical Sciences) and therefore Drama was the only other option for them. Learner 4 said that “People think the drama guys are stupid... [other people] are shy to do it themselves and they are immature about it.” (Cox, 2015: Learner 4). Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli mention a student who stated that Drama is considered to be something that girls enjoy and that this determines the other students’ perceptions around the subject (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). The irony in this is the fact that a number of the

students mentioned positively how Dramatic Arts has benefitted them in some way or another, and the value that the subject has added to their lives personally.

### **Masculinity in Schools**

Although masculinity has already been discussed in some detail, the microcosm of secondary schooling is defined by a very specific dimension of masculinity and, more specifically, adolescent masculinity. Richard Hawley (1993) discusses his experience in this environment in his text *Boys Will Be Men: Masculinity in Troubled Times* (1993). He says:

My first and most vivid impression was of how thoroughly male a boys' school felt. The presence of so many boys and men was not at all repellent. The absence of girls and women was harder to get used to, especially at first. The actual observation of a female on the premises was rare, however was no simple erotic arousal; it was a heightened awareness of the otherness... (Hawley, 1993: 53)

In a sense, this description is similar of the environment at Hilton College. With few females on the staff and being all-boys' boarding school, the students do not have much interaction with women. It can be suggested that their consistent interaction with other males further heightens their perceptions around heteronormative masculinity and, in turn, their desire to conform to these norms.

In her article entitled *Teaching the Boys*, Raewyn Connell (1996) discusses the way in which masculinity functions within the schooling system. Contradictorily, she suggests that "current patterns of masculinity formation push many boys away from areas of knowledge with which they should be in contact... languages and communication skills" (Connell, 1996: 221). This theory links directly to the process around which academic subjects boys are encouraged to choose as their Grade 12 subjects. There is much pressure, particularly from parents, for the boys to choose commercial and science-related subjects as it is perceived that this will provide them with the best opportunities in their futures. Subjects in the Arts are considered to be less valuable and not as marketable when the students apply to universities for tertiary study.

Although written a few years ago, Hawley also noticed the way in which the boys were maturing far quicker than he believed he had at the same age. He states that:

Their talents, introversions, extroversions, even their occasional pathologies were vividly recognized... They seemed older and bolder than my boyhood friends in the things they would risk taking on. They also seemed younger in their absence of inhibition; the toughest and most worldly-wise among them seemed to me more vulnerable than the warier and thus blander companions of my schooldays. (Hawley, 1993: 54)



As evidenced here, boys are extremely complex and in some ways, sometimes, are a little over-simplified. In closing, Hawley suggests, as this dissertation is doing, some level of explanation for the complexity of the boy/male individual:

Mistakes, terrible decisions, repellent behaviours occur so fast they hardly seem deliberate at all. A boy feels more witness to, than agent of, his own delinquency: the stone already through the window, the punch thrown, drunk or high before he knew it, the tape deck pinched, pants down, the answer copied, the deadly vehicle already into the intersection. Every boy is closer to crime, closer to the big mistake than we can comfortably acknowledge. (Hawley, 1993: 56)

In venturing into this research, these complex theories begin to provide some insight into the composite and multifaceted lives of adolescent males. It was necessary to provide a clear context for the study as Hilton College is a specific microcosm through which this study arises. Although many of the topics discussed in this chapter are not specific to Hilton College boys but to most adolescent males, some of them are exacerbated and highlighted through the context of an all-boys' full-time boarding school in a post-apartheid South Africa. The process and methodology of the project creation will be discussed in the following chapter.

# Chapter 2: Methodology and explaining the parameters of the Case Study

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Coming to know through our bodies means to understand how our desires, beliefs, values, and attitudes have been shaped and instilled in us. To know our bodies means to recognize how our deepest loves and hates, loyalties and prejudices become part of us. Knowing through our bodies means too, understanding critically the way our deepest feelings and passions have been structured by the culture in which we live.

(Shapiro, 2004: 13)

The aim of this case study is and was to explore the performativity of gender and sexuality amongst adolescent males (16 to 18 years of age) from within the context of the subject specificity of the Dramatic Arts classroom at Hilton College (KZN), with a primary focus on (contemporary) dance. This is and was explored through interrogating and examining the way in which dance performance practices (as a site of high school learning and education) can function as a space in which young adolescent South African men are given the opportunity to engage and critically consider and/or reconsider their own *masculinities* as social/cultural constructions: an embodied enquiry into self.

## 1. The Context of the Study

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Hilton College is a private all-boys full-time boarding school, accommodating boys from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Deeply rooted in tradition and a culture of providing the very best that a private educational institution can offer<sup>18</sup>, Hilton College also places emphasis on preparing its pupils for the responsibility that young men have in South Africa. There is a certain irony in this. Although the boys are privileged and exposed to a world of endless economic and educational opportunities, the education that they leave with at the end of Grade 12 more adequately prepares them to become a part of the capitalist machine as they are intended for privilege and white collar careers. As explained by Karl Marx, “it is the material conditions in which people live that determine every aspect of their lives, including their ideas” (Ferretter, 2006: 13). Louis Althusser suggests that “[W]hat [individuals] are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. Hence what individuals are depends on the material

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/mission-and-values.html> [Date accessed: 11 May 2014]

conditions of their production” (Althusser as quoted in Ferretter, 2006: 13). In stating this, it may be suggested that as these young men complete their schooling, they are expected to follow in the footsteps of their parents and an assumed privileged social class, and for many of these boys their future working and social lives are already planned out for them in this way.

One of the questions that I posit in this research is whether or not these boys are equipped with important life skills which will enable them to succeed in other areas of their life, and not only in the workplace. To merely grow through privilege (and privileged economic access) is perhaps not the whole story around identity and learning about self in relationship to the world. I would argue that as an educator, and taking on a more liberatory educational praxis (see Freire: 1970), I am more concerned with the development of well-rounded and developed youth who will move on into adulthood possessing the necessary life skills to make a positive influence in the world. This is a smaller area of focus within this research which is located within the interrogation of utilising the arts (and specifically Dance within Dramatic Arts) as a space in which to explore ideas/norms and identity; this in a process of understanding that holistic education is about more than just social position and social norms. In this way it can be suggested that this may be achieved through involvement in the Arts. While there is, of course, a focus on academics and curricula, it is the space offered within this participatory discipline for discussions and grappling with sometimes difficult and controversial issues, that can best and most holistically aid in the development of these so-called ‘life skills’, which are so important for a young male adult entering into the world outside of school.

## **2. The researcher’s location within the study and the journey to the case study**

The process of using dance as a mechanism for adolescent males to reconsider their masculinity challenges the colonial norms mentioned in the opening chapter (see page 13), and the resulting culture of many of the aforementioned private schools does not necessarily promote the challenging of social and hegemonic norms. As mentioned on Pages 8 and 9, within the context of private schooling in particular, the characteristics that are deemed acceptable and normative are imperative. Youth who attend the school buy into the values and ethos of that institution and are expected to behave accordingly. Failure to do so could lead to any number of punishments, from something smaller (such as a detention or loss of a leave<sup>19</sup>, where the students return home from boarding for the weekend), to something more serious such as a major school offence which can

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<sup>19</sup> As Hilton College is a full-time boarding school, the students are permitted ‘leaves’ over the weekends where they are permitted to leave the premises for a night and return to school on Sunday evening.

lead to an external hearing/inquiry, suspension and the request to leave the school. Hilton College is an institutional environment which does not allow any dissident behaviour and the students are therefore, in a sense, pressurised to conform. Deviance is neither tolerated nor accepted.

I am employed at Hilton College as a full-time staff member in both the Drama and English departments. My involvement as a young and relatively new female teacher<sup>20</sup> in a school such as Hilton College allows for an informed exploration of the way that these young men function daily. As a Drama teacher I am required to cover a module in Dance or Physical Theatre. In 2012, I choreographed a dance piece with the Grade 11s for a dance programme entitled *FUNK*. Originally *Millennium FUNK*, *FUNK* is a programme of dance pieces performed by high school students from the Pietermaritzburg and Midlands area. Each school cast is limited to a maximum of 12 performers and they are required to create a choreography, which ultimately compiles a shared evening in dance performance.

In 2012, I made the decision to use *FUNK* as an annual Grade 11 Dramatic Arts project. In working with the learners both in 2012 and 2013, I was intrigued by the way in which these young men (aged 16 to 18) engaged their own sense of self in the process of creating the dance work. I was inspired to investigate their personal involvement and the underlying issues around their constructions of masculinity that were evidenced in the rehearsal process; and more specifically through the often beleaguered gendered idea of 'dance' (see discussion below).

The choreography that was created with the Grade 11 class of 2014 became the primary case study on which this research is based. The project continued into 2015 as well, although I was not teaching the Grade 11 class myself, I only used students who volunteered to be a part of the work. It was therefore not an academic project for their Dramatic Arts marks or final results. The continuation of the project each year, however, means that it has been a deeply personal experience and journey for me as the researcher with a different group of students each year. It is therefore as great a learning experience for me as an individual and as a teacher interested in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) as it is, from what I have managed to ascertain through this research, for the students involved.

### **3. Dance as a medium to communicate/discuss/interrogate**

It is necessary to contextualise dance within the paradigm of an all-boys' South African schooling environment. That dance is considered, in this case study, as a way in which the students may have an opportunity to

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<sup>20</sup> This is my first full-time teaching post and I am in my third year of teaching at Hilton College.

(re)consider their masculinity brings along with it a complicated perception around the actual 'act' of dancing. At Hilton College I have made a point of rarely speaking of 'dance'. In order to hopefully break stereotypes and gendered criticisms about the field, I refer to 'movement' using the body as 'physical theatre'. What this essentially achieves is that the boys are less likely to judge it on the name as 'dance' carries a gendered and 'girlie' stigma alongside it which I wanted to challenge. I asked the boys to address these ideas in their interviews as well.

I also chose to expose the boys to a number of different styles of contemporary dance during their dance module in Drama. I hoped to provide them with some tools and experiences to enable them to better assess/negotiate/critically analyse dance work in the future; but more significantly, to open up the gender debates around who should/can and wants to dance. This was also done as a pedagogical strategy around talking about masculinity and manhood. It also helped the boys to understand the journey of the *FUNK* process that we were actually experiencing ourselves. The boys were given the opportunity to view dance works, take part in dance workshops and learn brand new things that they had never experienced before.

As dance is taught to the students as a form of communication and/or expression, this research could thus be suggesting that it might therefore hold the possibility to function as a type of go-between; a discipline/methodology that allows for a so-called embodied (and gendered) enquiry into self. Especially through the preconceived ideas that the students have around dance and that generally, as most of them stated (see discussion in Chapter 3), some forms of dance are not particularly masculine and the stigma around them therefore is that male dancers are "gay". As mentioned in Chapter 1, this word is not always and only used as a reference to sexuality but rather to something that is lesser and/or 'other'. Articulating dance in this way and experiencing dance differently therefore, I had hoped, would encourage an enquiry by the participants into thinking about themselves as boys and men in different ways.

Although the volunteered *FUNK* participants were actively involved in creating a dance performance work that is performed for an audience, the process of creating and making is, for my study, of greater importance. This is often termed 'experiential learning', which can be described as follows:

Experiential learning engages students in critical thinking, problem solving and decision making in contexts that are personally relevant to them. This approach to learning also involves making opportunities for debriefing and

consolidation of ideas and skills through feedback, reflection, and the application of the ideas and skills to new situations.<sup>21</sup>

It is the way in which the boys experience the process of creating the work that provided fertile ground for interrogating issues around boyhood and manhood, and the constructions/deconstructions of their own (and society's social and political) masculinities within the context of dance. This is echoed (in Chapter 3) with the findings.

#### **4. Masculinity and its place and relevance for this study:**

In interrogating the way in which adolescent males negotiate their (hegemonic) masculinity in a private, all-boys boarding environment, the fact that Hilton College places great emphasis on morals such as good manners, chivalry and gentlemanly behaviour cannot be overlooked. As stated in the first chapter, the first principal of the College stated that "his first and greatest desire was that 'Hilton boys' should be synonymous with 'gentlemen' (Morrell, 2001: 52-3). This is a fundamental aspect of what a number of the pupils feel defines what it is to be a 'man' and, being a female teacher in a male dominant environment, this is perhaps even more noticeable. Oftentimes the students are perpetuating sexist ideals without even having much awareness about it. When asked whether chivalry has anything to do with masculinity, learner 13 stated that

A parent will say yes... If you are respectful towards your wife you are masculine. Any child looks up to his father if he does the right thing. Even if he doesn't... You look up to him. A father who has got a son is far more proud and pushy with a son. (Cox, 2015: Learner 13)

These masculine ideals are in some ways learned from their own male role models (perhaps fathers or older siblings) but they are constantly reinforced, and lack of respect and bad manners are not tolerated at Hilton College. The intention of the case study was therefore to hopefully allow the boys an intermediary space in which they can consider themselves and their opinions in a different light, question and/or challenge these gendered societal norms, and examine the way in which the school (and hence their place in a very specifically constructed gendered society) has defined how they should behave. It was a possibility that, in fact, their perceptions would not change at all, but the hope was that the project would allow for some kind of platform in which this opportunity could be given. At the very least, the intention of this study and process was to

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<sup>21</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_d/mod20.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_d/mod20.html) [Accessed: 15 September 2015]

create a space for dialogue – dialogue that is not encouraged and even permitted in their immediate school and social environment.

A combination of elements allowed for this, primarily that the Drama classroom is a space in which the pupils feel safe and comfortable, and confidently discuss and grapple with (sometimes controversial) issues during class. I achieve this by spending an enormous amount of time getting to know each individual student and ensuring that each child knows how our classes are conducted. They are aware that in the Drama Department there is a zero tolerance take on hate speech, derogatory name-calling and teasing in bad taste. Everyone also has the right to an opinion in the classroom and it is the responsibility of the class to give each person an opportunity to share and have a chance to give their opinions and thoughts. As learner 2 stated in his interview, the Drama classroom is:

It is a safe place and you can do what you want. I feel confident in this classroom. The classroom looks really different to other classrooms. It's less formal. It's more comfortable. You'll learn easier if you are in an environment in which you are comfortable. Also you have been in one class with the same guys for three years so you really get to know the guys whereas in other classes you change around. (Cox, 2015: Learner 2)

In Drama in particular the students engage some challenging and through-provoking material (through plays and other dramatic and performance mediums) which encourage discussion and dialogue around relevant topics. It allows for the students to develop the skills of seeing various perspectives, as well as enabling them to engage the prospect that there are many different opinions to be heard. This is particularly relevant in that legacies of colonial and traditional ideologies might not correlate with the idea of questioning contemporary norms, such as that which is suggested in the theory of Guy Kimmel in Chapter 1 (see page 18 and 19) that males should not share feelings and emotions with one another, a boundary which is often broken in my classroom because of the nature of the relationships that are fostered there. An example of this may be in discussing play texts and sharing thoughts about characters in the plays that we are studying. Oftentimes students will relate a character to their own personal experience and, mostly, are willing to share these thoughts with the class. There is a collective trust that is built within each class where the students feel comfortable to share and discuss topics which they may not feel as confident to do (perhaps) in another class.

## 5. The Context: The boys and the school

In the context of secondary private schooling in South Africa, specific mechanisms of power are established. This means that hierarchy and order is fundamental, and this is particularly evident at a school such as Hilton College where constructions around history and tradition are of paramount importance. The pupils of Hilton College, for example, are made endlessly aware of their (privileged) place in society. The lifestyle that is lived at the school perpetuates the wealthy and privileged life that many of the boys have grown up in. In saying this, there are some students who are not actually as economically privileged as others, whereby they may attend the College on a scholarship or through sponsors. The boys are offered opportunities beyond what would normally be expected in a high schooling environment, from outreach programmes to entrance examinations for international universities, as well as sports coaching above and beyond what is normally offered in a schooling environment.

As the school is founded on notions of upright moral (Christian) conduct, it is expected that all students will exemplify these values in their conduct. Failure to do so will result in various forms of punishment and, should a student commit a major school offence, he will be requested to leave the school. This shows the price of the ethical and moral code of conduct that the students buy into. The boys' adherence to this code of conduct includes their social interactions, their behaviour when interacting with adults or their peers, and the way in which they are perceived by the outside world. In discussion around perceptions of Hilton boys, Learner 7 stated that:

We do get a lot of criticism because it's expensive... [People think] we ... [are] like, just rich boys that just don't care about... school, don't care about anything much, just think that our parents will just help us in life and we don't have to [work].... [Interviewer: Do you feel that people have a different perception of you because you're a Hilton boy... because it's an expensive school, does that change how people see you?] I think so. Not everyone, but I think [for] some people...they ask you [about your school] and you tell them and it's kind of like a different reaction, like they speak to you differently all of a sudden. I've definitely experienced that.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

The purpose of this research project was therefore to explore a performative space in which a group of these adolescent males are allowed a pedagogical and embodied opportunity to consider or reconsider themselves/their identity/their negotiations around masculinity from perspectives which may differ from that



which they see in the patriarchal environment of Hilton College, and also allow them the framework in and through which to explore other methods of non-verbal communication and physicality; namely through dance.

## **6. Gendered dance: The role that gender plays in dance and the boys' perceptions around it**

As the case study for this research was developed through the medium of dance, the way in which dance has been gendered throughout history must be considered. As previously mentioned, the pupils of Hilton College are aware of what is expected of them as young mostly affluent males growing up in society. Dance challenges these ideals, as it is generally deemed something that the pupils feel that women should partake in, and not men. As Ramsay Burt states, “for much of the twentieth century, the dance world has tended to appear to be predominantly a feminine realm in terms of audiences, dancers and teachers” (Burt, 1995: 12). This is most certainly still evident in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and it was mentioned in many discussions with the students that most often, other students will judge and mock something which they perhaps have little understanding of or have seldom been exposed to.

Race and culture also play a role in creating their perceptions. Although this idea may be true in the greater global context, it is specifically evident in this all-boys South African boarding school, where sport and brute strength are two fundamental aspects that define their idea of masculinity. This is challenged by dance therefore due to the students' perception around the femininity of dancing and the fact that in some cases it is perhaps not the most powerful representation of the male body, to their limited knowledge. The irony of this perspective, therefore, is that they perceive dancers as weaker or emasculated, and therefore shows their homophobic view on the dancing male. It is necessary here to mention that there are varying degrees of resistance to the idea of the male dancer, which is a complex aspect of this research which will be discussed in greater detail further on. In a sense, the boys do not view dancers as athletes, in opposition to a rugby player for example. It was also hoped that through the process of dancing in front of an audience on a stage, having created a piece of choreography, some of these (stereotypical) perceptions may be challenged.

Although not focused specifically in dance, the theories of performativity proposed by gender philosopher Judith Butler (1990) pertain to this area of the project. As discussed in Chapter One, performativity may be explained as the way in which an individual ‘performs’ their masculinity or femininity, as opposed to gender being primarily determined by the actual sex of the individual. Chris Brickell (2003) explains that Butler

suggests that through performativity (Chapter 1, Page 5), categories such as male and female, man and woman are realized (Brickell, 2003: 165). This has a link to the actual 'performance' within the realm of Drama and, for the purpose of this research, Dance within Drama. It is a somewhat ambiguous connection as in a performed scene, for example, although the performers are *performing a character* or something other than who or what they are as individuals, they still enter into the performance with their individuality and their own characteristics which they 'perform' alongside the character. To clarify, masculinity is performed through social and cultural interactions but masculinity is also performed in the creation of theatre and actual performance. In the context of this case study, this plays an imperative role as even when choreographing the piece, as the choreographer I made conscious decisions to empower the boys and to create the perception of their strength, their courage and therefore (a specific performed representation of) their masculinity. So, too, did I term the actual activity itself 'physical theatre' so as not to turn the students away from the experience but rather to encourage them to engage and participate.

In focusing this idea around the students at Hilton College, it may therefore be suggested that the way in which they negotiate their own masculinity is, to a great extent, determined by the institution's ideals which are institutionally imposed upon them. As Butler suggests, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender... identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 2004: 6). In considering this from a perspective of sexuality, this may serve in underpinning the theory that the students' perceptions around masculinity is 'performatively constituted' by their behaviour as Hilton College students. It is true that there are also a number of other arenas of struggle where hegemonic masculinity is constructed – religion, culture, language, for example – but for the purposes of this study I am focused primarily on the schooling ethos of Hilton College and the education system and how Dance fits within this paradigm.

## **7. Adolescent Sexuality**

The students' negotiation of sexuality is also compounded by the complex context of an all-boys' boarding school. As established in Chapter 1, the context of an all-boys, full-time boarding school comes with a heightened awareness around toughness, popularity and finding one's 'place' in this harsh microcosm of school boy society. It was mentioned that the idea of heteronormative masculinity fundamentally affects the ways in which the boys consider themselves and their peers. Also, within the context of Hilton College, the

boys ‘fashion’ their masculinity around the legacies and tradition on which the school is founded. The singing of the school song (Oh Boys of Hilton) as mentioned on page 25 would be a primary example of this. The tradition sees the students singing in the dining hall after dinner the Friday evening before the major hockey and rugby fixtures the following day. Crowding around the first teams for the respective sports in the dining hall is a long running tradition, which also perpetuates the idea that these sporting individuals are considered better, higher, and more popular than most of the other students in the school.

In considering heterosexuality (which is considered ‘normative’) Ramsay Burt suggests that “black people, gays and others are often designated ‘Other’ (Burt, 1995: 18). This underpins the students’ lack of acceptance of that which is different or ‘other’ from what they deem to be acceptable and ‘right’. As dance is sometimes considered something more feminine than masculine, the concept of using dance as a way in which to reconsider masculinity is somewhat ironic. This links directly to the way in which the students use the word ‘gay’ in the context of anything which is unpopular, lesser or not good enough. It does not always necessarily link to sexuality, per se, but the term is used extensively in general conversation amongst the students. However, in discussing this with the students, many of them reiterated that dance is a large field of performance. Most of them stated that not all dance is considered ‘feminine’, and that some styles which show strength and power of the male with sharp movements and are performed to popular music are deemed more acceptable, and something that they generally find entertaining and enjoyable to watch.

## **8. Dance within the Dramatic Arts curriculum**

The Independent Examinations Board (IEB) provides educators with a curriculum which all IEB schools are required to follow which is based on the NSC CAPS Document<sup>22</sup>. The curriculum refers to Laban’s Movement Analysis as a broad topic; however, there is no specific focus on dance. In the context of Hilton College however, there are other factors which impose on the success of dance within the Dramatic Arts contexts for the pupils who engage in it. One of these factors is the boys’ compulsory involvement in the sporting life of the school. As stated on the school’s website, “Sport at Hilton College is played with pride and passion, with an emphasis above all on developing the qualities and values of good sportsmanship, team participation and leadership”<sup>23</sup>. Aside from this, the gendering of dance is clearly evident at Hilton College, and dance is

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<sup>22</sup> (<http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ngH3UDSp2Ag%3D&tabid=420&mid=1216> [Date accessed: 11 May 2014])

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/sport.html> [Date accessed: 11 May 2014]]

perceived as feminine or less masculine than some other activities, which links directly to the boys' negotiation of masculinity. Whilst partaking in the act of dancing, they are physically engaging in something which, according to their perceptions, challenges their own masculinity. Through the performance of dance, they are allowed the opportunity to challenge their own preconceived ideas around dance and, in turn, their thoughts around masculinity and what defines it are challenged. The irony of the contradictory nature of their involvement created a basis for some excellent discussion around perception and what a massive influence society has on adolescents. It is also necessary to consider the difference between sport and dance and, though they are both physical activities, there are clearly different connotations around each.

The style of dance in question is hugely important, as not all styles are the same and some may be perceived as less or more masculine than others (for example, breakdance is considered totally acceptable to the boys but ballet is not). In discussion with the students it was clear that dance is a vast realm about which most of their knowledge is hugely limited. Learner 3 stated that

...a male kind of hip-hop dancer or someone who [does] break dancing and all that kind of stuff, I think in society it's seen as much cooler<sup>24</sup> compared to a guy, a male, who's doing ballet. [Interviewer: Why do you think it's perceived as cooler? What aspects of it make it cooler?] I'm not too sure. I think you know, hip-hop in like...hip-hop in society. So you know if you go out anywhere, to a party or anywhere, nowadays with the modern kind of vibe, it fits in kind of thing. So it's...it goes with the views of society. Ballet is more like a performance, it's like a theatrical kind of thing and people see that [as] a bit strange. (Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

The style of dance that will be used for this project is contemporary dance and it is closely linked to physical theatre. The reason for terming it 'physical theatre' is because it does not carry the same connotation as the term 'dance' does amongst the students.

## **9. Dance within the Hilton College context and its connection to masculinity**

As discussed, the school's focus on sport contributes to the way in which it constructs a hegemonic and 'accepted' sense of masculinity and, furthermore, how this maintains/challenges the 'hegemonic' ideal. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the social legacy of the sport at Hilton College comes primarily from the focus that the school places on it, but also, the physical dexterity required to play for the First XV rugby team in particular, and the status that comes along with doing so. This is an aspect of the pupils' lives which is deeply

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<sup>24</sup> 'Cool' is a word used amongst teenagers to describe something that is currently popular or fashionable.

rooted in tradition and the history of the school itself. The emphasis placed on sport is great and, although academics are also of importance, it is on the sports field where the pupils generally feel the most unified and united as a school.<sup>25</sup> Academics are consistent at Hilton College (as each pupil is required to pass each academic year), however, where Sport is compulsory, Culture is not. In a discussion around the way in which Hilton College encourages its students to develop into well-rounded individuals (whether successfully or not), Learner 5 stated that

I think it does encourage you to be well-rounded... they're strict at sport and they do encourage you to take part in cultural [activities], but they're not as strict on the cultural part which is where a lot of boys do slack in the school. I think in the cultural part more boys should be involved. [Interviewer: Why do you think the boys... have to be really forced to do it?] I think the boys are like, really nervous... they do care a lot about what other boys say. So I think, like, other boys, to be honest, would like to do it, but some of them... just...care too much of [sic] what other people say and think of them. [Interviewer: So that it will be a negative thing if they're doing something cultural?] Well they think so, but... it's not really like that. (Cox, 2015: Learner 5).

The stigma around cultural activities is also complicated. Some students are exceptionally talented in music, acting or singing, and those who are confident in their abilities are accepted and generally continue in their involvement in the cultural extra-curricular without any alienation from other students. This also means, however, that in many cases you have a small pool of boys who are capable in all of these areas and who therefore carry the cultural life of the school. It is difficult to encourage involvement from other students in the school. This also filters through into the lives of these individuals and their sporting commitments as well. As sport is compulsory, even the students who are in your production/performance are still expected to attend all of their sports practices and fixtures. During important training periods in the sports season, especially, sport will be first priority, despite what anyone may be working towards in the Arts departments. As Learner 5 suggested too, many boys are nervous to expose themselves and get involved in cultural activities because they are afraid of (gendered) judgement from their peers (Cox, 2015: Learner 5).

## **2. The Project and Process**

As previously mentioned, this project is participatory action research. According to the US National Library of Medicine, this can be defined as follows:

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/prospectus/202-general-information/939-sport.html> [Date accessed: 11 May 2014]

PAR (participatory action research) seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. At its heart is collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships. The process of PAR should be empowering and lead to people having increased control over their lives. (Baum et al, 2006)

This type of research therefore allows for the participants to engage with the project on a different and more intense level, which enables them to, hopefully, better understand the patriarchal society in which they find themselves and be afforded the opportunity to reconsider the previously mentioned norms of the institution.

### **2.1. Key Questions to be asked**

The key objective of this research was to explore the extent to which dance performance practices (as a site of learning and education) can function as a transgressive space<sup>26</sup> in order to shift perceptions around masculinity, and in which adolescent South African men can critically reconsider hegemonic masculinities and their individual masculine identities as they are manifest in the private boys school system in KZN. The means through which this exploration took place was through my Grade 11 students' involvement in the creation and performance of a dance work for the production of *FUNK 2014*, a dance show featuring work created by students from schools in and around the Midlands area. In order to answer this key question there are other sub-questions also to be answered:

- How can dance function as a go-between for adolescent males to consider and/or reconsider their own identity and masculinity?
- What are the perceptions of adolescent males around engaging in dance and why do they have these perceptions?
- What is the value of cultural activities in an all-boys school, with specific reference to the aspect of hegemonic masculinity, and how does involvement in these activities impact on those involved?

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<sup>26</sup> A transgressive space is an area in which boundaries are moveable and can be shifted, and this allows for an opportunity to reconsider and challenge ideals and perceptions.

## **2.2. Research Methods and Approach to Study:**

This is a qualitative research project, using a case study as the primary focus for the research. The process of working with my Grade 11 Dramatic Arts students at Hilton College and their creation of a dance work for performance serves as the case study. It was through the students' involvement in this process that they could hopefully shed some light on the way in which dance may function for them as a transgressive space, within the framework of the school environment at Hilton College and specifically what is expected of them as learners at the College.

The students engaged in a number of class discussions and creative lessons during the process. The formal interviews took place at the very end of the project, after the final performances had been completed. Although the interviews occurred at the end, the other discussions in class, the creative lessons and the brainstorming of ideas for the theme of our piece are what informed these interviews. It was hoped that throughout the term and the dance module that the students were encouraged to consider masculinity, their own masculinity and the perceptions around it; not only their own individual perceptions but those of the other students at Hilton College. In some ways, it appeared that some of the students had not had an opportunity to consider 'masculinity', and it was challenging for them to define and explain what masculinity actually is. It was beneficial to give them these opportunities of consideration before they engaged in the final, formal interviews at the very end of the project.

The project is participatory action research, because of my involvement in observing and engaging with the pupils as they worked through the creation of the piece. It is also ethnographic research. It is thus as I am immersed in the culture of the school, as previously mentioned. I know the pupils well and for me too it is a space of learning. I engage with new students in this journey every year and I learn a great deal from them through their responses and their involvement. The project aimed to be a safe environment for the pupils to be honest about their thoughts, feelings and involvement in a cultural (dance) project.

## **2.3. Extension of the project beyond the *FUNK* choreography**

Although the creation of the piece is the primary focus of the research, the students also engage in a number of other projects in order to broaden their knowledge and understanding of dance as their academic module in Drama in Term 2. These include:

- Workshops in physical theatre, Rudolph Laban, ballroom/Latin-American dance and contemporary dance
- Exposure to dance in performance in a professional setting as an excursion (the viewing of a Flatfoot Dance Company<sup>27</sup> performance in Durban at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre)
- Engaging in a theoretical research project around a style of dance or a well-known choreographer

The purpose of this academic extension was to inform the students' understanding of the vast spectrum of dance on some level as a foundation for their own involvement in their dance project.

#### **2.4. Who was involved in the project:**

The students who participated in the study were the 13 boys in the 2014 Grade 11 Drama class at Hilton College. The class is mixed race, mixed academic ability, and is comprised of boys with varying talents and strengths. They are between the ages of 16 and 18. Although the *FUNK* project was an academic work and all boys were expected to participate, they volunteered to be a part of the study and it was not compulsory to engage in the interview process.

#### **2.5. The process of creating the *FUNK* choreography:**

The students used all of their drama lessons from the beginning of Term 2 2014 until Half Term to create the piece. This included workshops with external dance instructors, theoretical dance work around Rudolph Laban and a dance project in which they were required to research a modern dance pioneer and present their information to the class in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. The workshops were also aimed at giving the class some foundational practical experience in dance, which assisted in the creation and workshopping of the piece itself. This meant that for approximately 4 weeks the boys were experiencing intense and concentrated dance exposure.

The piece was created through a process of workshopping between myself and the cast. This means that I do not merely choreograph a work and teach it to the class for them to perform. Instead, the class is involved in

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<sup>27</sup> Begun unofficially in 1995 by Lliane Loots, FLATFOOT DANCE COMPANY is a Durban-based African contemporary dance company. "Often working with memory and history, FLATFOOT has developed a unique identity as a contemporary South African dance company that is known to offer politically and socially charged dance theatre work. Working from a contemporary based training that includes, Graham, Hawkins and Release Technique, the company... has a strong pull from the traditional African dance forms that are located in KwaZulu-Natal." (<http://flatfootdancecompany.webs.com>)



the process of giving ideas, creating new movements and assisting to piece all the ideas and aspects of the work together. This is a process that I have followed since I began teaching at Hilton College. I enjoy involving the students from the very beginning and this also leads to them taking ownership of the work and really investing in it personally. I wanted the concept of the piece to revolve around identity and the identity that the boys felt they were labelled with as Hilton boys.

The process began through engaging, as a class, in an open group discussion around the idea that one can have more than one identity and that we wear these different 'masks' in different situations and contexts. In doing this the students discussed the concept of 'identity' and what they understood this label to be. All students were permitted the opportunity to speak and to share opinions. Mind-maps were drawn up as suggestions were made so that the class could follow the trajectory of our discussion as it occurred. The suggestion was made that the boys should wear actual masks. Shortly after this decision was made I attempted to locate plain white masks but I was unable to do so. The class therefore began the process of making their own masks using gypsum bandage and newspaper. This was actually more effective in many ways as, just as they wear their own identities, so the masks they made would only fit their own faces as they had been moulded especially for them. I wanted the boys to rehearse with the masks on as much as possible and therefore needed to consider this early on in the rehearsal process.

The piece was ultimately made up of four different sections. They began in a chorus formation and used gesture and mime to communicate. There was an image projected on the back wall of a silhouette of a face with a question mark inside. This hinted at the theme of identity and the questioning thereof. The boys created a set of tableaux, each representing an aspect of the Hilton life that they think contributes to their perceptions around identity. These were academics, gym and fitness, and rugby. The boys had props/costume items to illustrate these, namely gym gloves, school ties and rugby jerseys. The boys had a unison section of movement in the middle which I choreographed using movements that they had explored during their practical work with me and the workshops that they had participated in. At the end of the piece the boys moved to the back wall, removed their masks one by one, and pointed upwards. As they did this a slide appeared on the back wall with their names on it, above where each boy was standing. This was to symbolise the fact that although they feel that they wear many masks, they are really and truly their own individual selves underneath the identities that are inflicted upon them.

The theme of the piece considered identity (and, in turn, masculinity). The topic was discussed at length in the class before rehearsals even began. This meant that in conversation with them in their interviews, they had already thought about a number of the issues that were discussed. This, in turn, links directly back to the theory of Judith Butler and her discussion around the way in which individuals *perform* their identities, and the previous suggestion that some of these are subconscious. Many of the students were challenged in their perceptions around identity and, more specifically, male identity.

Some people classify masculinity as having a wife, having a house, having children, having a job, earning money for your family ... even if you have a feminine side to you, you are still a man. What are you if you don't have a penis?  
(Cox, 2015: Learner 4)

The title of the piece was UNMASKED and the programme note was as follows:

What defines us? To what extent are we identified by our likes, our talents, our school, our gender? Who are the individuals behind the masks that we wear? In the hopes of answering some of these questions and through our class discussions around negotiating identity, this piece of physical theatre was created by the Grade 11 Dramatic Arts pupils as an academic project for their Dance module this term.

The week before the performances we had a 30 minute technical rehearsal and two dress rehearsals. The pupils performed their *FUNK* choreography to paying audiences at the Hilton College Theatre in May of 2014. They performed four times and there is a finale at the end of each performance which is a group choreography performed by the whole cast and choreographed by one of the staff members in charge of one of the participating schools. The choreographer of the finale is different each year. It is a nerve-racking experience for a number of the boys each time this point of the process takes place. Some of them have never even set foot on the Theatre stage before this point. *FUNK* is extremely popular and the tickets for each show are sold out every year without fail. Although this is daunting, it is a huge privilege and an excellent learning opportunity for the students to perform for a full house, four nights in a row.

## **2.6. How is the data obtained:**

The case study involved a series of one-on-one interviews with the pupils once the process was complete. The pupils were aware that they would be involved in creating the choreographic work as a compulsory project in

their academic syllabus for Grade 11 Dramatic Arts. They were also aware that I would be interviewing them about their experience and involvement in the project, and were asked to consent<sup>28</sup> to this.

The students were interviewed once at the end of the project and their dance module, and they were interviewed with three sets of questions pertaining to different aspects of the process: before they began working on the project, during the rehearsal process and after the final performance. The interviews took place individually in my classroom without any interruptions, and were recorded with a voice recorder and the interview questions are attached as Appendix A. Before each interview commenced the students were reminded that their identities would be protected, that they did not have to answer any of the questions and that they should try to be as honest and descriptive as possible. The interviews took place over a number of weeks during 2015.

## **2.7. Aims and intentions to be achieved through this project:**

The overarching purpose of this research was to interrogate the assumptions and stereotypes around dance that are to be found in the context of a private all boys' boarding school, and how this affects the way in which boys' masculinity is perceived/negotiated and constructed. The intention was that that the boys' perceptions around dance would change through their exposure to various styles of dance personally, as well as viewing them in performance on stage.

Also, by exposing the learners to dance and movement (such as a Flatfoot Dance Company performance, for example), learners are allowed the opportunity to witness how dance can be used to communicate ideas and emotions, to discuss an idea or concept, and also to tell a story. This type of exposure also makes everything that they are learning in the classroom that much more valuable and relevant. It brings to life what is being done in the classroom. Alongside this, to see a final product or a goal in sight is something that, through my experience, I have noticed to be highly motivating for boys. As mentioned in Chapter 1, William Pollack (2000) speaks about how boys connect emotionally through sport. He suggests that camaraderie, competition, personal fulfilment and self-worth are, for some, experienced on the sports field. He states that "through sports, boys learn to win and to lose, to celebrate their strengths, to face and accept their limitations and

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<sup>28</sup> As the students are minors I was required to receive consent from their parents/guardians to participate in the study. As each child's name is featured on these consent forms they have not been included in the dissertation so as to protect the identities of the individuals. They have been, as has been indicated in the ethical practice, kept as confidential data by myself as the researcher.

weaknesses” (Pollack, 2000: 274). It appears that as dance is a physical practice, there is possibility for a similar outcome in this sense.

# Chapter 3: Analysis of the project

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The volunteered Hilton College boys were asked to partake in an interview with me, the researcher, in which they would answer questions around Hilton College, Drama, Dance and *FUNK*. Before the interviews began the interviewees were informed that their responses were anonymous and that no original names would be used in the project itself. They were also aware that they could stop the interview at any time and were encouraged to be honest and to provide detail where possible. Each participant met individually with me for the interviews and they were recorded using a voice recorder. The recordings were thereafter typed out accordingly. The interview scripts have not been included in this dissertation due to their length but are, as has been indicated in the ethical practice, kept as confidential data by myself as the researcher.

## **The Study's Location in the School**

At Hilton College we rarely speak of 'dance'. In order to hopefully try and encourage the male learners at Hilton College to participate in an Arts discipline which comes highly gendered and loaded with stereotyped assumptions, I refer to any expressive movement while using the body as 'physical theatre'. What this essentially achieves is that the students are less likely to resist participating and judge themselves and each other in the praxis of the work, which was also addressed in my interview questions. I also chose to expose the boys to a number of different styles of dance during their dance module. I hoped to provide them with some tools and experiences to enable them to better assess/negotiate/critically analyse dance work in the future. It also helped them to critically analyse and evaluate their personal journey of the *FUNK* process. They were given the opportunity to view dance works and take part in dance workshops, most of which they had never experienced before.

I also asked two local male dancers/choreographers to run workshops with the class in physical theatre and contemporary movement. As these dancers are technically trained, some of my students found this challenging as they were pressed to work on technical movement which, in some cases, requires a certain level of skill. In turn, this gave them a fresh and new perspective on 'dance'. I wanted the students to be taught something about (contemporary) dance by men. In choosing to have a male teacher to work with the

students, I hoped that this would challenge their preconceived ideas around men who dance, and that these teachers could hopefully inspire and challenge the students and therefore expose them to something different that they had never experienced before. It was also completely new for the students to be taught *anything* in the Drama classroom by a male, as opposed to their female Dramatic Arts teacher<sup>29</sup>.

We (myself in consultation with the students) chose to use the theme of identity for the piece and, more specifically, the boys' identity at Hilton College. The hope was that in discussing these topics during class time (including ideas around masculinity and Hilton College) that the students may, from the beginning of the process, start to consider them in preparation for the final interviews. The responses that they gave at the very end of the process would therefore be thoughtfully considered as they had spent a number of weeks working through these topics in creating the work. The students contributed passionately in discussions around the theme of the work. They appreciated the platform of the interviews as an opportunity to share their views, particularly in how the public (i.e. people outside of Hilton College) perceive them because of their affiliation to the College.

### **The Students' Responses**

As discussed in Chapter 1, Hilton College is an institution which is founded on patriarchal and hegemonic/masculine principles. To participate in a dance piece may be considered somewhat contradictory to this. As the students expressed, some styles of dance (namely ballet, in most cases mentioned) is considered more effeminate and therefore less attractive. As Hawley (1993) mentioned, the modern male is often defined by qualities such as dangerous aggression and insensitivity. Through the students' participation in *FUNK* they were permitted the opportunity to channel this aggression into a physical/outward expression of an inward sentiment, which also held meaning to them personally (in the discussion around the theme of identity) and therefore was an outlet for them to consider this. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) mention that

Men can dodge among multiple meanings according to their interactional needs. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic

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<sup>29</sup> Ironically, in questioning the students around this idea, some of them said that the gender of the teacher actually did not matter. They still would have found it as challenging if it had been me running the class. It appeared that in some cases my assumptions around their understanding of gender were somewhat incorrect, and my preconceived ideas around their perceptions were challenged during the interviews.

masculinity at other moments. Consequently, “masculinity” represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The students are, as previously mentioned, required to participate in the *FUNK* process for their academic work, however, it is hoped that ultimately they will find enjoyment in their involvement. In the past it has also been said that they are happy to participate, however, they want to be sure that they will not look unattractive or less masculine on the stage. In turn, the work that is choreographed allows the students to showcase their masculinity by encouraging the physicality in performance through lifting and the use of body weight and strength. This is mentioned in greater detail further on. Therefore, even in the performance of *dance*, so the students ‘perform’ their masculinity. This too links with the use of the term ‘physical theatre’ instead of ‘dance’ to encourage involvement and break stereotypes around it.

The connection between the theme of the piece (namely identity) and Butler’s (2006) theory of performativity is also evident. Butler states that identity is a “practice” (Butler in Kirby, 2006: 44). As quoted in Chapter 1, Connell (2010) states that:

In... a lot of popular belief, masculinity is set in concrete... and impossible for women to influence. ‘Boys will be boys’, ‘all men are like that’. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is abundant evidence that boys differ widely, masculinities are multiple... and that women have a considerable role in making them, in interaction with boys and men. (Connell, 2010)

In discussing masculinity with the students it became more noticeable that in some cases the students are not particularly eloquent in their expression around masculinity and sometimes struggle to convey their opinions around it, as seen in a response such as Learner 5’s response when questioned “what is masculinity”, he stated “Being a man”. (Cox, Learner 5: 2015)

### **Reflection on the involvement in *FUNK***

We never thought we’d have as much fun as we did.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

The *FUNK* choreography, as previously mentioned, has become an academic project for the Grade 11 Dramatic Arts class. This means that the students do not have a choice in whether or not they can participate in the dance work as far as their subject Drama curriculum is concerned. Over the years that this project has been done with a group of Grade 11 students, the educational value of the project is clear. Learner 1 stated that

Upon seeing the previous performances of *FUNK*, two previous performances, it was a little bit shocking to think that our class would be able to pull off something as, as daunting as that. But, it... it slowly sort of went from being nervous to being, how good it would be if we got it right. (Cox, 2015: Learner 1)

Learner 12 shared the experience that he had when his peers came to watch the performance of *FUNK* and what their expectations of the show were.

They thought it'd be like, you know, hip-hopish or whatever, and what they first saw, it wasn't, they were like [shocked expression], but they did think it was pretty cool at the end. Like, they first thought it was, you know, weird, like, I'm so glad I don't do Drama whatever. And after the show they were like, oh you guys were some of the best okes<sup>30</sup> there, the best group there, whatever. Ja, it was kinda nice to hear.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

The students became more aware, through their involvement, how other students place judgement on something that they do not understand, even with relation to Dramatic Arts as a school subject. The students took pride in showing their peers that they can perform a dance work on the stage and therefore also, hopefully, change their (the audience's) perceptions around dance and the Hilton boys in dance, as seen in the abovementioned response. As Learner 12 suggests, it was encouraging to hear his peers tell him that the Hilton College students were "the best group there" (Cox, 2015: Learner 12). The students thrive on affirmation; particularly from their peers. This underpins Kimmel's (2008) assertion mentioned in Chapter 1 (see page 9) around the "expectations about proving masculinity" amongst adolescent males. The involvement in *FUNK* may beforehand have been seen as a hindrance to this but ultimately allowed the students to feel supported and valued within the school. It reiterates, too, how the Arts can assist in developing meaning and worth in the lives of those who participate in it. It also links to the natural competitive nature of boys (mentioned by Pollack (2000) in Chapter 1) in that, even though *FUNK* is not a competition but a collective evening of dance work, the students have their own perceptions about the programme and are competitive in their performance.

Learner 3 was surprised at how his perceptions around his involvement changed during the process. He stated that he

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<sup>30</sup> 'Oke' is a South African slang term derived from the Afrikaans word 'outjie' meaning 'a small boy'. It does not have a negative connotation and is often used as a general term of reference to males.



...thought from the beginning before we started any of it, I definitely thought I was gonna hate it, like, it was something I never wanted to do. But then, during the actual performances, it was actually, like, you'd come off and you'd be chuffed with yourself, like, ja guys, we nailed that one, that was a goodie<sup>31</sup>. [Interviewer: Do you think...were there any skills that you learnt doing *FUNK* that you could use on the rugby field, like focus, things like that?] Ja, there was actually...a lot of those focus things helped, ma'am. Pre-match I tend to get very hyped-up, just 'coz that's how I play, but then they did help me focus in times, like if we were down by just those two points and then we needed to put our heads together, it would help me calm down, control the situation and get people's heads into the game properly. (Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

This response was not particularly surprising, as many of the students are resistant in the beginning of the process. This student mentions the fact that it is encouraging to achieve something that is applauded (literally, in this case) and to know that you were a part of creating it and can take ownership of its success. It links to the previous sub-section in feeling affirmation and value through contributing to something which can be considered successful. Alongside this, this student also discusses some of the other skills that he learnt during his involvement such as focusing and relaxing before going onto the stage to perform each night. This may be linked to dance and education specialist Margaret H'Doubler (2000) and her comments around dance in education. In her book *The Dance, and Its Place in Education*, she suggests that:

The dance is peculiarly adapted to the purposes of education. It serves all the ends of education – it helps to develop the body, to cultivate the love and appreciation of beauty, to stimulate the imagination and challenge the intellect, to deepen and refine the emotional life, and to broaden the social capacities of the individual that he may at once profit from and serve the greater world without. (H'Doubler in Ross, 2000: 9)

As this student mentions, through his involvement in *FUNK* he has learnt other skills which can be utilised in other areas of his life, outside of the Drama classroom or his performance of the *FUNK* choreography. This reiterates the value that the Arts can have on these students and that (perhaps somewhat) ironically, skills can be learnt which can even be used in their sporting activities as well.

For some of the students this was the very first time that they had ever participated in any form of dance. It was undoubtedly daunting for some and in the early stages it is often challenging. Learner 9 stated that:

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<sup>31</sup> 'Goodie' is a slang term for the phrase 'a good one', in this case 'a job well done'.

At first it was quite daunting or scary, to do it among your mates, and suddenly to bring out a more creative side of yourself which you normally hold back, that was pretty hectic. But then the more we got into it and we were all trying to outdo each other almost, and it was actually quite fun. (Cox, 2015: Learner 9)

This student mentions that the learners were trying to outdo each other, highlighting the competitiveness which is almost intrinsic in boys. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (see page 11), Pollack (2000) says that camaraderie, competition, personal fulfilment and self-worth are, for some, experienced deepest on the sports field. With reference to the abovementioned quote, I would suggest that this can also be achieved in the Drama classroom and, in this case, participating in a Dance workshop. Learner 9 speaks of insecurities and a fear of showing weakness in front of his peers, however, through further participation the students actually thrive off the competitiveness that comes about in these situations. The students ultimately find pleasure in the experience and are learning in the process.

Learner 4 discussed the importance of creating a dance work that commented on identity and the identity of the Hilton College boys. He stated that

... Just the perception as, like, you gotta follow the crowd and do what everyone thinks is acceptable.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 4)

This comment also underpins the theory that dance is something *unacceptable*, that the students are aware of the way in which other students will react to their involvement in a dance performance. The students spoke at length about the fact that in many cases they are perceived as rich snobs who are spoilt, and that, according to them, this is not always true. They mentioned that it was important for them to be considered individuals and that, although they are Hilton College students, they also have their own individual personalities. In consideration of the theme of the piece, Learner 5 felt that:

I'm not really bothered what other people really think of me, 'coz I know who I am and stuff, but I think it is important to address the issue of identity 'coz other people here are sheep, like, they have to have the comb-overs and the beaters<sup>32</sup>, and they all have to be buff and strong and gym and all that stuff. I'm the kind of guy who's like, well, I'm not a gymmer.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 5)

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<sup>32</sup> 'Combovers' are a specific style of haircut which are currently fashionable. The word 'beater' is a shortened version of the term 'wife-beater' which refers to a form-fitting white ribbed tank top worn by men [http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=wife+beater] (Accessed 6 October 2015)

The opportunity for the students to discuss their identity was successful during this process and the students vehemently communicated their opinions around the stereotypical Hilton College student (as previously discussed). Learner 3 mentioned that:

...the perception of a Hilton boy is, as always, the rich little snob that mom and dad love. But that's now become the thing to focus on, like, okay, some people are just accepting this and acting like a bunch of rich snobs. But then, I think that it's the complete opposite of what we are, I mean, half of us our parents are scraping the bucket to get us to come here, so we've got no money to go and play around with, like everyone else says, ah you guys can all just go and do this and go on holiday every weekend and all that. But like, a lot of the boys here are very down to earth guys... (Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

When asked about maintaining the *FUNK* project as a Grade 11 Drama practical assessment, Learner 5 said that:

...if it was voluntary I don't think many boys would want to do it because of... how you'll be judged and... initially, I mean the whole class was, with us no one wanted to do it, so if it was voluntary no one would want to do it, but...[Interviewer: So why do you think I force you?] The learning process. I think it's like a new skill, it's something new and, I don't know, maybe you couldn't do something that you've never done before and find a new... not a new you but maybe a new passion or different feeling you get from it... (Cox, 2015: Learner 5)

The students addressed the fact that sometimes they can be resistant in various situations. In other words, they may not always readily participate in something if they feel that they may not enjoy it. As Learner 5 states, a new skill can be acquired through doing something challenging. It is also notable that in some cases the students expected the process to be easy but they were definitely challenged. In answering the same question, Learner 7 stated that in Grade 11 "you are mature enough to do it" (Cox, 2015: Learner 7). It is relevant that this student mentioned maturity as an important factor, as he realised that one has to commit to the process. He felt that younger students might not be able to cope with the demands of the *FUNK* project. Learner 9 said "it brought everyone together and I think we weren't all together before that" (Cox, 2015: Learner 9). This too links to Pollack's (2000) comment on the camaraderie experienced between boys on the sports field. As Learner 9 mentions, this camaraderie can be experienced dancing in a choreography together as well.

### **Have any perceptions changed during the process, and if so, which?**

We gained a lot of respect for dancers I think, because you actually...it takes a lot of strength, like we saw in the lifts you actually get tired, so ja we got like a lot of respect...and, like, just being in sync and in time and like ja...making it look good it just, it takes a lot of effort. (Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

It's something different and it's something good to actually try, 'cause it does make you change your perspective on things. (Cox, 2015: Learner 4)

The students were asked a number of questions which encouraged them to think critically about perception. Most of the students who mentioned that they did not necessarily know a great deal about dance before starting the module in Drama, stated that their perceptions were definitely changed through their involvement. As learner 7 states, he gained "respect for dancers" (Cox, 2015: Learner 7). This was one of the key aims of this project that the students would, through their involvement in *FUNK*, find a platform in which to reconsider and possibly change perceptions and preconceived opinions. When asked whether or not he thought that others' perceptions of him have changed since he performed in *FUNK* as opposed to playing on the sports field, he said:

Ja I think so. I think a lot of people were shocked, especially maybe, not my Grade because my Grade know that like, I'm quite big on rugby but I'm still involved in choir. But I think a lot of all the younger grades don't really know that and like, I think they were quite...quite shocked to see, like, me on the stage...

(Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

As this student conveys, there is little balance between Culture and Sport at Hilton College. In saying this, he did not appear embarrassed by this at all but rather just made the observation that other students may have been shocked to see him performing on the stage, once again linking to perception and the perceptions which exist amongst the boys of Hilton College. When asked what he thinks he learnt through the process of creating the piece and performing in the Theatre, Learner 1 stated that

[What] I took away from it, is actually how difficult it is...to get something so perfect. Because, normally, a person would go to the theatre, watch it and say, 'Ah that's great', then, when you actually look into the details of making it, creating a piece from start to finish with every little detail and every little detail having to be that exact way, it's actually quite amazing if you think about it. (Cox, 2015: Learner 1)

Learner 3 answered the same question quite differently in saying that:

I definitely learnt that you can control a situation. So, like, if I were to walk onto that stage before *FUNK* and they would say, okay right, now here's a monologue, just say this, like for example, I wouldn't be able to get my head around the fact that I... actually, now need to focus and read this thing. But now if I walked on I would just blank everything out, it's so much easier to just focus on something and just keep your head all contained. And then ja, that was my main thing that I took out of *FUNK*, but then also to look at things from other perspectives. So you'll have your general favoured perspective, like I wouldn't go into a rugby game and say, ah, let's see how these guys can do their ballet moves or something. And same thing with dance, I'm not gonna go there and say, ah these guys all look gay. I'm gonna go there with an open mind and say, okay ja, this is what they're trying to do, this is what they're trying to say. (Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

This is a valuable comment as this learner has been heavily involved in the sporting life of the College and therefore experiences the lack of balance between the two disciplines (sport and the Arts) on a daily basis. It is noteworthy that he mentioned he would watch a dance work in the future with an open mind. The process of participating in an unknown and challenging experience has developed him in the sense that he will view dance work from now on with a deeper understanding and a greater capacity to analyse the work successfully. The work and his involvement have changed his perception around how masculinity (within the dancing male body) is negotiated.

I think it's a very good idea, because it gives something for a class to work towards, and you have an end result which is, is not only used for a number of marks on a page, it's also used for...it's also used to be able to change the people who are performing. [Interviewer: How do they change?] Whether it's their perception of dance, or whether it's their physical movement or, whether it's their understanding of creating a piece, whatever it may be it will have an impact in some area. (Cox, 2015: Learner 1)

This learner draws on many skills that were acquired during his involvement in *FUNK* and speaks about change. This is also valuable as the aim of this research was to change perceptions and the way in which the young adolescent males negotiate their sense of self within the context of Hilton College.

## **Hilton College: Mapping a boys' school**

I think... the Hilton Boy... he has to play rugby, he has to go out and enjoy life. He has to be of [sic] a relatively well-off family, average academics. (Cox, 2015: Learner 1)

The students discussed the expectation of them as a result of attending Hilton College. The questions asked about the College focused on the perception of the boys (internally and outside of the school gates) and the reputation of the students attending the school. The students were asked what it means, in their opinion, to be a Hilton boy. Learner 10 stated that

It means to be respectful, well-mannered, to look after your friends, build tight relationships, it's sort of just doing the basic values of what a gentleman is. So you are kind and respectful to everyone else, you don't swear, you don't bully anyone else. It is sort of prepping you for society outside. (Cox, 2015: Learner 10)

The students have a relatively clear understanding of the ethos of the school and the moral uprightness that was mentioned in Chapter 1, and it was touched on by most of the students. This is something that is ingrained in them from the very beginning of their time at the College. In saying this, Learner 1 stated that "everyone has this perception of the all-rounded individual but I think the actual opinion of it is someone who does well in academics but really well in sport" (Cox, 2015: Learner 1). Of course, the students are also all involved in many different extra-curricular activities which alter their perceptions of various aspects of the school, however this comment pertains to the discussion in Chapter 1 around the value of the Arts within the context of Hilton College. The same student also stated that

Culture, sports and academics aren't all equal. They are supposed to be equal to become a well-rounded individual but they're not, and that is something I have noticed since doing Drama. (Cox, 2015: Learner 1)

It was mentioned in Chapter 1 that a student that Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli interviewed for their Australian study discussed his thoughts around how sports teachers at his school did not show acknowledgements for his achievements in "drama and art" (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 258). He states that they "just love all the sportos [boys who play sport] and they don't have time for anyone else" (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003: 258). This appears to be a trend that is also evident at Hilton College, which underpins the assertion that their findings may not be specific to the Australian context. It is also

noteworthy that Learner 1 only discovered the so-called ‘favouring’ of sport over Culture at Hilton College once he began doing Drama as an academic subject. This suggests that this may be an issue which is only relevant for the students who are actually involved in the cultural life of the school as they are personally impacted by it. In the same vein, another student mentions his own perceptions around culture at the school:

I think it does encourage you to be well-rounded...like you have to be at class obviously but you also... they’re strict at sport and they do encourage you to take part in cultural [activities], but they’re not as strict on the cultural part which is where a lot of boys do slack in the school. But... I think in the cultural part more boys should be involved. (Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

Learner 7 highlights the sense of pressure that is placed on the students within the realm of sport, however that there is less pressure for them to participate in cultural activities. It is also necessary to mention at this point that *FUNK* is the only opportunity in the year for boys to participate in dance, within the cultural life of the school<sup>33</sup>. Along with this, it is an exclusive programme as only 12 students can participate, and it has become the Grade 11 Dramatic Arts project. This does perhaps side-line other students who may be interested in participating in something of this nature.

Learner 7 also commented on the perception of outsiders of Hilton College boys, as mentioned in Chapter 1. When asked what kind of criticism he felt he experienced from outside the school, he stated that “we do get a lot of criticism because it’s expensive... [people think] we ... [are] like, just rich boys that just don’t care about... school, don’t care about anything much, just think that our parents will just help us in life” (Cox, 2015: Learner 7). The students spoke around a stereotype that comes about from the school fees of Hilton College. The students were passionate in their discussions around this aspect of their identity as Hilton College boys, particularly in our discussions which informed the theme of the *FUNK* choreography. The work was therefore an effective opportunity in this sense which allowed the students to consider their identity and think about the ways in which they conform (or do not conform) to the patriarchal and traditional society at Hilton College and why. In a similar discussion around the *FUNK* piece, Learner 11 also mentioned that:

I think that it is something that we do need to show the public, that we’re not just rich boys that think that we should just get what we want ‘coz we’re rich, or we were upper class. I think that it should be, to me, I’m no

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<sup>33</sup> This of course excludes any choreography which may be included in the major school play for the year, should it be a musical.

different to anyone else, it's how we act as a, as one body, is what defines us as a school.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 11)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, it was hoped that the preparation of these young men for the world outside of school would also be considered. Learner 11 states:

[The school] gives you the tools, ma'am, but it's all the mind-set that you have. Some boys are too lazy, some boys think that they should just be spoon-fed, some boys work their arses [sic] off and get the marks, and then some boys just don't do anything and think, okay, I'll make it through. (Cox, 2015: Learner 11).

Considering this also reiterates that there are many boys who attend the College who come from different backgrounds and are all individuals with different identities. The colonial and traditional way of many private schools, as mentioned in Chapter 1, can lead to some students feeling as though their personal identity is lost in some ways as they are stereotyped because of the school they attend, and as a result of some of the students that attend the school and the way in which they conduct themselves. Through using *FUNK* as a platform to consider identity in a visceral format (i.e. using the body to communicate through dance), the students were allowed the opportunity to make a (public) comment about an area of their school life which they feel is misconceived.

The students, themselves trapped in the play of competing contexts and discourses around their own perceived constructions of masculinity, are often not aware of their own perceptions around the power play associated with questions around what it means to be a 'man'. It is evident how broadly and extensively their patriarchal context affects their perception of gender and masculinity in particular. Regularly mentioned was the 'brotherhood' at the school and that the students create unbreakable friendships with their schoolmates. Learner 12 stated that "you're always there for your brothers, you like, stand up for each other, and, like, you don't burn<sup>34</sup> your brother unless it's life-threatening" (Cox, 2015: Learner 12). Learner 12 also spoke about the traditional morals of the school and how, in recent times, he thinks that these have become far more difficult to uphold. He mentioned that the world has changed a great deal since these original values were first written and that it is not as easy as it used to be to maintain them. He said that currently in the world of adolescents:

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<sup>34</sup> To 'burn' means to expose another person for something that they have done wrong, which usually results in punishment.



It's cool now to do drugs and drink and, you know, kind of be, sexist in a way, to women, you know, like, "look at that binay<sup>35</sup>, she's such a bitch" [sic] and all that stuff. In modern times, ja. I think a lot's changed. Mainly for me, one reason, could be due to porn, 'cause I know most boys here watch it, and that kind of degrades...look[s] at all the females, boys start to see them as pieces of meat. So when we go out and party they try and get with them, they get back and they go "ah she's such a bitch [sic]," whatever. (Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

As previously mentioned, although these are common issues that many teenagers deal with through their adolescent years, the specific microcosm of an all-boys' boarding environment creates a far more intensive atmosphere where many of the difficulties of puberty are exacerbated. As Learner 5 mentions, "I think boarding life encourages bad behaviour to an extent, you... like doing bad things" (Cox, 2015: Learner 5). This can be connected to Richard Hawley's comment that "mistakes, terrible decisions, repellent behaviours occur so fast they hardly seem deliberate at all. Every boy is closer to crime, closer to the big mistake than we can comfortably acknowledge" (Hawley, 1993: 56). Even Hawley's research, which is somewhat dated, sheds light on the struggle that these young men encounter daily in their development from boys into men. This behaviour further endorses the struggle that adolescents deal with in the negotiation of their identities during their teenage years, reiterated by the boys' concern for how they would be perceived by their peers when taking part in something such as *FUNK*.

Sexism is not uncommon amongst teenagers and social media, television and the internet are increasingly enabling this. Learner 12 mentioned that "back in the day...men were more [respectful] of women. Now it's all like, ah look at her, like, it's mainly just about looks now... most ads now have half a naked woman...so it catches a man's interest" (Cox, 2015: Learner 12). This comment once again highlights the patriarchy of the male-driven institution that Hilton College is and, in turn, the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and the role of the male in society, as endorsed by the organisation. It also highlights, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the value of a project such as *FUNK* which can provide the students an intermediary/transgressive space in which they are free to subjectively consider ideas and concepts that affect them personally on a daily basis. This is a much larger aspect of the students' daily lives which is perhaps less directly relevant to this research, however it does underpin the theory around the patriarchal society in which the students find themselves. It reiterates Kimmel's (2008) so called "Guy Code" which states that "nice guys finish last" (Kimmel, 2008: 44). This endorses the neglect of all of the morals and social values that Hilton College prides itself upon.

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<sup>35</sup> Binay is a slang, somewhat derogatory, South African term for young women.

In discussing the *FUNK* choreography and its connection to feeling and looking masculine, Learner 3 stated that:

It just puts your level of confidence up that one bar that you needed to go up. Because, I know with a lot of guys, we didn't want to do it just because we did not feel like dancing around a stage like a bunch of idiots. But then when you look at it and you actually see what you're doing, when we started looking at some of the things on video and stuff, we were like, yoh, this actually looks quite cool... [Originally my friends said] I feel so sorry for you, you're gonna look like such a bone-head... And then after [the] night that they came to watch us they were all like, "wow, okay"!

(Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

This comment illustrates the previously mentioned aspect of 'perception' and how much the students focus on the way in which their peers perceive them. They need to be reassured that they will not be made to look laughable on the stage in order for them to fully invest in the project. Although this comment was made in relation to *FUNK*, it is not uncommon amongst teenagers and reflects on the very complex nature of the social dynamics of high schools. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Murray Milner, Jr. (2006) states that students who engage in Drama are often termed "drama freaks" or "drama queers" (Milner, 2006: 76) and reiterates that these activities are perceived as "unmanly"...for "sissies", or "fags and queers" and that they deviate from "some of the key norms of the dominant groups in most high schools" (Milner, 2006: 77). Again, although this research is not from a South African context it is most certainly reflected at Hilton College.

Sport is a most powerful influence on the boys' negotiations around masculinity. When asked whether playing contact sport such as rugby is in any way connected to how masculine you feel, Learner 3 said that

I wouldn't say that much, ma'am. Rugby for me has always just been something I do just because I like doing it. It doesn't make me feel like I'm more of a man, it doesn't make me feel like I'm some big, tough guy, it's just something that I love doing so I play it. [Interviewer: Do you think some people perceive you as some big, tough guy because you play it?] I think they always will, ma'am. Like if I walked up to Pierre Spies<sup>36</sup> and looked at him, I'd say ja, you're tough 'coz you play rugby, I wouldn't say, oh you're tough 'coz you walk around with a tie and a suit and a briefcase every day. It will always be like that.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

Kimmel (2008) speaks of adolescent males and their trouble in "navigating the relentless domination of jock culture" Kimmel, 2008: 70. This so-called 'jock culture' completely counteracts and offsets the perceptions

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<sup>36</sup> Pierre Spies is a South African rugby player who represented the Springbok rugby team between 2006 and 2013.

around culture and the Arts within the Hilton College context. Learner 3 touches on the societal perceptions of others and how our jobs/talents/what we invest in defines us so greatly, and it must be mentioned that this is a specific study in a smaller context, but considers some issues which are notable beyond the gates of Hilton College. When asked whether or not the process of being in *FUNK* had changed his perception of masculinity, or made him feel less or more masculine, Learner 3 said that

It didn't really change, ma'am. If anything it made me feel more masculine just because I was man enough to go out there and actually do it, and the other guys would sit behind and say, no, I'm not doing Drama, that's for gay people. (Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

It contradicts what would have possibly been the expectation of the students before they began the *FUNK* process, because of the connotation that Dance carries of being more 'feminine'. After the process had ended a number of the students stated how they actually felt *more* masculine after having performed *FUNK*. This is exactly what was hoped would have been experienced, and for the students to shift their perspectives and reconsider how they negotiate their masculinity in their male-driven, patriarchal environment.

The students spoke at length about their bodies and the importance of their physical appearance. As previously mentioned, this is not an uncommon trend amongst adolescent males, however, it appears to be compounded by the boys' living situation, and the fact that they spend such a great deal of time with one another. One of the students, when asked what makes you popular at school or part of the "in-crowd", he answered "Gym, and A-teams" (Cox, 2015: Learner 2). Learner 4 stated that "People gym every day. People do it for girls. It is obsessive" (Cox, 2015: Learner 4). Learner 5 pointed out the gym culture amongst the students and the role that this plays in their level of popularity amongst their peers. He states that

Being physical and being big and gyming<sup>37</sup> is... [You're] not seen as a cool oke, but you are like...normal...you fit in. That's what you do here you know. Ja, I think gyming and sports; you don't play a high rugby team or you don't gym, like, if you do chess or something as a sport, I mean, you're almost frowned upon, it's like, [you don't] fit in. [Interviewer: Do you think that's fair?] I don't think that's fair, I just think that...I mean, everyone's to themselves, I mean you can't change, I mean some person who wants to play chess as a sport or be who they are, let them be who they are, I mean they have their own rights too... (Cox, 2015: Learner 5)

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<sup>37</sup> 'Gyming' is a slang term that the students use which is a verb form of the word 'gym'. It means making use of the gym facilities.

The students readily buy into a trend and, as previously mentioned, because of the specific environment of a full-time all boys' boarding school, this can sometimes be compounded. The way in which other students perceive how they look also comes into question when performing in *FUNK*, as one uses their body which is written with each individual history to communicate an idea to an audience. (Loots, 2010)

Contrary to this student's comment, Learner 1 stated that "one of the concepts that I thought would be a bad idea was lifting, because I'm not one of the best persons...built for lifting" (Cox, 2015: Learner 1). Even within the safety of the familiar Drama classroom, this student anticipated the possibility for judgement should he be unable to successfully execute a lift because he felt that he was not build adequately to lift other learners. This is completely contradictory to what some of the students felt about 'dance'. When questioned about dance movement and the connection to appearing effeminate, many of them agreed with this and stated that ballet in particular is not an entirely manly activity. Strength and fitness are also imperative in dance, however, which illustrates the contradiction in this student's statement about his build. As Learner 12 states

I take my hat off to ... male ballet dancers. You have to be seriously strong to do some of the stuff they do. You have to be strong to do dance, but personally, I take my hat off... I...see what they have to go through.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

One of the other students had a different opinion around the gym culture amongst the students and he stated that:

Gym is one thing for me, I like doing it because it makes me feel better, it's a place I can go and just clean my head out... it's just my safe place, and I do like looking decent. But then for some people it's all about getting big, doing this, no matter what I'm going to get big... It's definitely an obsession and it's almost addictive. You'll get people who'll try and cancel other things just so they can go and have more time in the gym so they can look better and get bigger.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Humphreys and Ruseski state that "the second most popular reason reported for adolescent use of steroids was to improve physical appearance... [They] clearly have different motivations than athletes" (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2007: 3). Although this comment is specifically pertinent to the use of steroids, it is the combination of steroids and intense fitness regimes that will affect change in the students' physical appearances. Of course physical exercise and fitness is beneficial for any human body. It is clear,

though, that in some cases there is a blurred boundary between healthy exercise and self-care, and an obsessive desire to look a certain way. The same learner mentioned above stated that:

They say that when you come out of gym and you've got your pump on and everything, you just feel unstoppable and this and that, and it's actually just a load of rubbish. You come out of gym, you feel good, it just makes me feel healthy and, like, I don't feel like I'm just sitting there being a cabbage. [Interviewer: Does everybody worry about the fact that it's to feel healthy, or do you think that quite a lot of it is to with people's perceptions of how you look?] I could say it's like, 75% of the boys will say that it's, I wanna look good, and then you'll get the 25% that say, ja, it's healthy, that's why I do it. (Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

The students also mentioned the perceptions around their popularity and the importance of sport in this determination.

Externally Hilton boys are sort of seen as those like rich kids, externally. And then a lot of people in Hilton sort of see that Hilton will sort of be like 'main honds'<sup>38</sup>. So it's sort of 'main honds' are okes that go jolling<sup>39</sup>, that try to drink as much as they can, that play like big first team sports, get like super high marks, and so it sort of groups together within the school... those that sort of adhere to it and those that just decide well I'm going to go do culture instead of playing sport... I'm going to focus on my academics instead of doing like 'big man' sport or instead of going drinking I'm going to go and study. (Cox, 2015: Learner 10)

This comment is complex and touches on a number of focus areas of this research. The student mentions the boys who are revered for their popularity amongst women but, in turn, the term 'hond' refers more specifically to the act of womanising. Lindsay Clowes (2013), as quoted in Chapter 1, draws attention to the way in which men behave towards themselves and others, and suggests that their distasteful behaviour "might be linked to men's attempts to live up to normative expectations of patriarchal masculinity" (Clowes, 2013: 13). It can be asserted therefore that in a patriarchal institution such as Hilton College, these masculinities are considered normative and hegemony is not to be challenged. It is distressing to consider that these young men are perhaps underexposed to discussion and informative information which could educate them on these principles, so as to use them in the world beyond Hilton College when they ultimately leave the school at the end of Grade 12.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://twitter.com/Hondhandbook?s=01>

The word 'hond' is the Afrikaans translation of 'dog'. It implies that men who treat women disrespectfully are 'dogs', but that this is an admirable and inspiring behaviour. It encourages misogyny and sexism against women.

<sup>39</sup> 'Jolling' is a slang South African term for 'partying'.

It can also be suggested that within the greater context of Hilton College, it is in fact the all-rounder individual who is most popular. First team sports do carry credit; however, those who are academically capable as well as being talented in sport are considered role models and leaders in the school. Although academics do come into play in some ways, Learner 1 states that “culture is sort of pushed aside so it’s a bit of a shame, because it is not seen on the same level as everything else” (Cox, 2015: Learner 1).

An even tighter microcosm within sport is the specificity of rugby. Rugby carries a certain stigma around it at the College, as Learner 12 commented

It is a very aggressive sport. I mean, if you have a grudge with someone then you go have a practice and you [play] versus that someone you pretty much go for that person, you try [to] take him out. I mean, for me, last year, I kind of sent off two of my own team mates, but like, complete accident though, I didn’t mean to...so ja. I’m an aggressive person. (Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

The raw aggression is an element of the sport that makes it exciting and encourages buy-in and engagement from the other boys. Once again, this underpins Clowes’ comment about aggression which leads to violence, and how this may be perpetuated in a patriarchal environment. The connection between rugby and masculinity is clear and most of the students commented similarly in this regard. When asked about whether the students who play rugby are perceived as more masculine than students who don’t, Learner 12 stated that

Ja...if you do hockey, no you’re not as strong, you’re not as strong as us or physical as us. I mean, hockey guys...they can run circles around the rugby guys ‘coz they’re not as running fit...[the rugby guys are not as running fit as], ‘coz they mostly just run, and they also have to bend their backs so their backs are quite strong, where[as] in rugby, well we’re pretty well-rounded strong, but it’s more on the physical side, there’s always breaks [i.e. injuries] and all that stuff and hockey there’s not so much. (Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

Learner 7 explains this concept in that “because [in] rugby you’re pushing, you’re tackling...ja, it makes you feel tough...you’re just being...you feel strong” (Cox, 2015: Learner 7). The connection between this and the feeling of strength that the students identified during their *FUNK* performance is a similarity that could have

been unexpected for some of the students. The boys feel invigorated when they are perceived as strong and tough. Learner 11 stated that

Size and reputation as a first team rugby player is everything... you're seen as a god. Kids are too scared to greet you; kids are too scared to even come up to you because they think... I don't want to get in his way. You feel as though...they think that sports and masculinity and this huge drive to be top sportsman or big or whatever, is such importance [sic] in their lives. (Cox, 2015: Learner 11)

In terms of popularity and how the students are revered by their peers, Learner 3 explained that he feels that sport is considered even more important than academic achievement. He said

You'll get the guys who are not so academic but then really top sporting and they fit into that popular category just because of their sporting thing. They might be the biggest nobody outside of school, no one would know them, yet now they're automatically popular 'coz they play A team rugby. Or you'll get the really clever guy, not good at sports... well he's not that cool anymore because he doesn't play sports... people get pushed towards thinking the more popular you are is almost reflected on what sports you play and what team you play. (Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

The students were questioned about the way in which they are perceived on the sports field versus performing on the stage. Learner 3 addressed this topic too and stated that there was a boy a year above him at Hilton College who did Drama and played for the First XV (the First Rugby Team) and that other people's perceptions of him did not change at all. He was respected in both areas of his involvement.

[He played] KZN rugby and then takes Drama and does *FUNK* pieces. People's perceptions didn't change. When he was doing his *FUNK* pieces or monologue or whatever it was... there was [sic] people watching, they, I think, went into it with an open mind, 'cause I did... I looked up to him a lot with sport. But then when I went to go and watch [him] do a monologue or something like that I didn't go in saying, oh okay, here's a first team rugby guy, I said okay here's [name]. And then when you watch him play rugby, like, right, here's the first team rugby guy, here's [name]. (Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

The student of which Learner 3 speaks was already considered a popular student because of his sporting achievements. It may possibly be suggested that he is less likely to be condemned for his involvement in *FUNK*

because of this. It is notable, however, that Learner 3 gained understanding from observing an older boy (and role model) perform in *FUNK* and this influenced his perception and involvement in *FUNK*.

The students addressed the connotations behind Dramatic Arts at Hilton College and how the subject is different from other subjects. Learner 13 said that “it’s a small class, like, you can relate to the boys because you’ve all known each other for years” (Cox, 2015: Learner 13).

I think being on stage shows that you actually have more balls [sic] than most people, because I know a lot of guys that would be way, way, way too scared to even think of going up on stage in front of 500 people.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 11)

Only a few of the students actually mentioned the perception that at Hilton College, if you study Drama you must be gay. The stigma appears to have changed in time and the boys now have some level of respect for other boys doing the subject. Although it is no longer ‘gay’, some of the boys did mention that there is a link to intelligence rather and the value of Drama as a subject that is not considered as important when you are applying to universities, that you are not intelligent enough to do other, so-called ‘more challenging’ subjects. Learner 2 said that

People think that Drama is going to get you nowhere, you won’t get a job if you do Drama, you do Drama because it is easy. A lot of guys want to make money so they do subjects like Accounting and Economics. Parents often choose their subjects for their children, and if you say you want to do Drama, they say you can’t.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 2)

The connection to being less intelligent is quite complex. As Drama is a practical subject, many boys who really struggle with writing and comprehension do take Drama as a matric subject because it is a 50% practical and 50% theory subject. In many ways this theory can be proved by the number of boys who are academically limited who choose Drama as a subject. In saying this, achieving an ‘A’ in Drama is quite a challenge. There are many boys who work exceptionally hard and still do not achieve the highest results. Learner 4 said that “People think the drama guys are stupid... They are shy to do it themselves and they are immature about it.” (Cox, 2015: Learner 4). Learner 11 speaks of something similar as he states



I know that a couple of guys just thought they'd do Drama 'cause it's easy. And that came to them as a wrong answer quite late into Form 4 and they weren't actually doing so well, they actually noticed that it was actually quite a tough subject. I've enjoyed every minute of it, although there have been some times when I've battled... But I think it's also just a bit of journey, to see that... even when I don't want to do it, I don't have really a choice if I'm gonna get that A. I think it's the one subject that has taught me, just pushing at the very max you can achieve what you want... Drama's been the one subject where that's, revealed that to me more than any other.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 11).

Another student discussed his parents' involvement in the choosing of his subjects:

My dad would have preferred me to take Science I think because...he is a doctor so he did the whole medical thing and at first like, before I chose Drama, medicine was what I was going to look at. So he said, 'No, you must do Science'...I said, no...I think I'm gonna change to drama, he said, that's fine... it doesn't matter, you do what you want. But, you know, in... more recent times applying to university... without science in terms of medicine... he makes the comment every now and then... I should have taken science.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 6)

Although this learner ultimately chose Drama as a subject, his father still questions his decision and feels that his application to university for some courses would have been easier had he chosen a subject such as Physical Science. The suggestion here is that Sciences and Commercial subjects carry more weight in the real world and that they are considered more valuable than creative subjects. Learner 12 also mentioned that because he has done Drama for a few years he feels quite defensive about the subject if anyone is to comment negatively about it.

[Interviewer: What does it feel like when people say, 'I'm so glad I don't do Drama'...?] I just wanna like... I'm pretty aggressive so I just wanna punch them in the face! (Laughs). [Interviewer: Why? What makes you feel that way?] Mainly because I feel strong about Drama. I've kinda like, done it for quite a while now, it kinda grows on you, all that stuff.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

Learner 7 also commented on the atmosphere of the Drama classroom and the fact that it is a more relaxed atmosphere. This contributes greatly to the students' willingness to share/engage/contribute during class.

I think the class setup has a lot to do with... I feel more kind of [at] home, like you're sitting on the couch, and like, it doesn't feel like there's a barrier between teacher student, you don't feel like you guys are just standing at a board...It feels like we can communicate and...it's...warm. (Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

The fact that the classroom is a safe environment where the students feel comfortable and able to share and contribute speaks volumes about the value of the subject in the daily lives of the students. Learner 2 stated that "being someone who likes to stay, sort of the...likes to keep to himself, like, [Drama] forces you to come out of your shell a little bit" (Cox, 2015: Learner 2). This comment is contradictory to what Kimmel (2008) mentions in his 'Boy Code' that "Boys don't cry", "It's better to be Mad than Sad" and one should "Take it like a Man" (Kimmel, 2008: 44). The class environment in the Drama classroom allows for the students to engage in conversation that encourages intellectual processing and critical negotiation and assessment. It is through these discussions that students can learn the skills to cope with feelings, emotions and to share (sometimes) controversial opinions so as *not* to have to resort to violence or other means of physical outlets. Although in many cases what Kimmel suggests is true, the subject of Dramatic Arts provides fertile ground and ample opportunity to steer away from these dangerous stereotypes and unspoken 'rules'. It is evident that much is gained in the students' experience in Drama, and Learner 1 summed up what Drama has done for him as an individual:

I just really enjoy the subject on the basis that it teaches you certain things, obviously it teaches you the subject matter but through that it also teaches you certain things about the world in which we live and to some extent about yourself, that you wouldn't find anywhere else. (Cox, 2015: Learner 1).

Many of the boys did not know much about dance at all before they encountered the Dance module in their Drama syllabus, aside from what they had seen on television in music videos or popular reality shows such as *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Strictly Come Dancing*. Learner 1 stated that he had "only danced... twice before *FUNK* and that was ballroom dancing, but that mainly involved family events... it wasn't really for [his] own enjoyment" (Cox, 2015: Learner 1). It was a common thread that their involvement in Dance as a part of their Drama syllabus exposed some of the boys to dance for the very first time.

Through their involvement in *FUNK* the boys were also given the opportunity to consider many other pieces of dance from a FLATFOOT choreography at the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre in Durban, to the works performed

by the other schools in the cast of *FUNK* 2014. Linda Ashley discusses the importance of viewing other dance work:

Appreciating the significance of a dance of your own, of other students or of professionals is a complex process. You need to be able to recognise the constituent features and understand how they relate to: each other; the content of the dance; the context. It is not good enough to say, 'I liked it. It was good.' If you understand more of what makes a successful dance your own work will improve. (Ashley, 2002: 173)

This came about as an added benefit to the students' involvement in the *FUNK* process, as they have learnt skills which will now enable them to educate other students on how to decode dance. The boys felt that involving themselves in something new or different gave them the tools to thereafter assess the work. It is therefore key to note that dance education and arts appreciation is an *imperative* aspect of high school education. One of the students took ballet classes when he was much younger. He said that

I did ballet, when I was nine, for about a year. My step-mom kind of like, forced me to do it, like, for the first couple of times. I said, I don't wanna wear those weird tights and stuff! So ja, I did that. And I started liking it, but it was kinda weird though, 'coz I was, like, the only guy and the rest was all girls. But I made sure I was all black...like, I wouldn't touch pink. (Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

Although this Learner does not discuss this information often, he does not feel the need to defend the actual act of dancing, however, he made it clear that he would not wear pink and he was acutely aware of the fact that he was the only boy in the class. It illustrates that even at a young age this learner noticed these social constructs and they affected the way in which he understood his involvement and negotiated his participation.

In connection with the students gaining the capacity to assess dance, some of the students mentioned that they think this may explain why some other students who watch *FUNK* are quick to place unfair judgement on other schools if they do not understand what the piece is conveying. Learner 12 also touched on the idea that sometimes when something is not understood it may be challenging to gauge how to react to it. He explains this as follows:

Like, people are afraid of the unknown. So they don't understand something, they'll fear it and they'll put a name to it. Well...I'll use ballet. When you're young you're like, ah, ballet is for girls, this is so gay. I mean, that was my first thought being told I'm doing ballet and stuff, I was very against it, so I was afraid people would

laugh at me, call me gay. And as I get older I've got more respect for the ballet dancers because they have to be strong, they have to be fit, and all the practices they have to go to and all that stuff. [I have] a lot of respect for them now. (Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

The experience of dancing in *FUNK* and also taking part in the dance-based programme created for the class definitely opened up the students' minds to the possibility of really engaging in a new and unfamiliar (albeit somewhat daunting) process.

Before *FUNK* happened I was like, there's not a chance I'm going to be able to dance, I'm going to look like a retard. But then, looking at *FUNK*, dance isn't just hopping and skipping around a stage, jumping and twirling and what...it's...there's so many different aspects of it. [Interviewer: Were you worried about people's perceptions of you when you started?] Well ja, definitely. I was like, well, I don't know, I've always seen guys that go and do ballet as quite awkward and strange. But then... [Interviewer: So do you think, is there a gay aspect of dance?] To an extent, ma'am, but then, I think if you look at it that way it's quite childish because it's just, ja, people's opinions. (Cox, 2015: Learner 12)

This too shares a similar perception around the idea that perhaps one fears what one does not understand. It was hoped that this process would change the boys' ideas about experiencing different aspects of the Arts.

In discussion with the students around dance and what they know about dance it is clear that they are underexposed to it. It was hoped that through the process of the dance module which I created in class that they would ultimately be far better equipped to understand dance. When asked what sort of people dance, Learner 7 said

People that... have rhythm and are passionate about it, and I think it's really cool to be honest... and, well, anyone... if you put your mind to it I think you can do it, because in the beginning, like, we were all so, like very, like no ways, we can't do this, but at the end, like, it sort of became like second nature. So I think, like, if you put your mind to it and you learn and you're willing to learn you can do it. (Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

It was also mentioned that some of the students admire dancers because of their physical strength and agility, as well as the fact that through extensive rehearsal dancers are able to achieve some phenomenal feats, which are entertaining and impressive to observe. The students spoke about the connotation of 'gayness' around

dancers, although this does not necessarily mean homosexual (as mentioned in Chapter 1). Learner 11 felt that

People say that the boys that dance are normally, people call them gay, people single them out, but in fact, guys who dance are no different from anyone else, they've just got movement. And, like, boys will say, if they're young, ah no you're gay, but then when they grow up to be pretty big 'coz the dancers, in like, famous areas, are quite muscular, and they gain the respect.

[Interviewer: Where do you think the whole gay thing comes from in the dance world?]

I would say, ma'am, because dancing is seen as a more of a feminine kind of thing, through the eyes of most boys. So seeing a guy dance is more out of the box... Gay, meaning that it's a girl's thing to do rather than... play sport.

(Cox, 2015:

Learner 11)

The students are aware of the generalised perception that dance is a more feminine activity to engage in and not necessarily an obvious activity for boys to partake in. In saying this, however, most of the students actually seemed very comfortable with their own sexuality when it came to actually performing in *FUNK*. There are many possible reasons for this, one of the primary ones being the fact that I engaged the boys in a great deal of physical theatre as opposed to technical contemporary dance. Although before beginning the project it was suspected that more students would question how their masculinity would be perceived on the stage as they are dancing, this was not entirely evident. In fact, as previously mentioned, for some students it even further reinforced their masculinity.

When asked whether his opinion of dance and dancers changed during the process of creating the work, Learner 3 said that "it definitely did... I did not know much about any dance...I thought dance was quite a strange thing to go and do, for a guy" (Cox, 2015: Learner 3). He also mentioned that

I think just the perception of it is that a guy who goes to dance [goes] just because he's not good at anything else. But then I see some of those guys on... 'Strictly Come Dancing', some of those guys are... huge, like, proper rugby built, and they can pick up a girl and throw her half way across a stage with no effort. So I think it's definitely a very underestimated thing.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 3)

The responses to the questions around dance in Dramatic Arts were mixed. Some boys felt that dance is an important aspect of the drama syllabus because they felt that they learnt skills which they have used in their

drama practical work since then. Others were unsure and felt that they could possibly have done without it. These tasks which led up to creating the work were not optional and as a class they engaged in activities they may never have participated in otherwise. Learner 7 stated that

It was definitely something different. Like, at first...we weren't as... open minded, so we were, like, no, we can't do this, but as we went on, like especially... when I had to run and the whole class caught me, like, I never thought they'd be able to do that. But... it just helped us expand and grow...and I was happy to be a part of that. And to go watch Flatfoot in Durban was also very cool to watch because I'd never watched something like that before. So, like, it was a good experience...I do think it's important because, like, a lot of boys won't want to do it because, like, I don't know, they don't want to be judged, in a sense. But it's good to step out of your comfort zone and do something that you've never done before so you can grow. So something that challenges you and, like, ja, puts you to the test, I think is good to do. (Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

Similarly, Learner 1 felt that

Dance is a very big part of the performing arts... and I think it is very important for the performing arts to look at each section [regardless] of [whether] it is useful or not, and to study it, and we're actually quite lucky that we've been given the opportunity to do *FUNK*, and to do dance related things, because I don't think many...even other drama classes would have had the same opportunities. (Cox, 2015: Learner 1)

It is also key that the students identify with the fact that Dance is an integrated aspect of a far greater field: the Arts, as this student has clearly stated. Culture, as it is termed at Hilton College, is made up of many separate areas that are all comprised to form one body.

### **Researcher's Response Within the Paradigm of Participatory Action Research**

Although this project has been used as a case study and for academic purposes, it is encouraging to notice what is gained and how the students develop throughout their involvement in such an experience. It was clear that many of the students felt that they probably would not have voluntarily participated in the project and that they were endorsed the fact that it was not optional for them to participate – they had to perform in the piece as a practical mark for their Dramatic Arts results.

Much assessment has been made of the many comments which were given during the interviews. It cannot be ignored that each child has their own individual opinion and they are by no means a collective voice speaking on any of the issues at hand. A number of boys also stated that participating in a dance show did not affect how masculine they felt at all. It is a positive outcome of this study to note that their involvement in the work encouraged the students, even if momentarily, to feel pride in partaking in something which may be considered 'lesser' or unpopular.

Though the successes of the project are duly noted, there were some areas of the project which fell short of expectations. The process of interviewing students brings with it a certain level of bias and subjectivity, as opposed to an anonymously filled-in questionnaire. The reason for choosing a one-on-one format was so as to allow an opportunity for discussion and to be able to encourage the learners to explain themselves and expand on the claims that they state. The level of honesty in their responses, however, cannot be guaranteed. I am also their teacher, which can be considered from two angles. This could either encourage the students to be honest and share openly because of the trust that has been built between us over time, or it could encourage them to shape their answers around what they think would be expected of them to say.

It must be mentioned too that the class only comprised 13 boys out of a school of over 500 boys. In this sense, with such a small group of individuals, it is unlikely that much difference will be made to perceptions around masculinity and dance at Hilton College as a whole. Even so, this does not undermine that work that has been done and those perceptual changes that have been made within this group and, if anything, it has catalysed a discussion around these issues which the boys have a will to discuss.

The interview process also did not run according to plan. It would have been ideal to interview them before, during and after their involvement in the project. Due to time constraints however and the fact that the class was performing for a paying audience; we had a specific deadline that could not be changed. This affected my ability to interview the students and they were therefore interviewed at a later stage after the process. More thorough and in-the-moment responses would have possibly led to more detailed information from the boys' perspective about their involvement in the project.

# Chapter 4

## Dance: The Foundation of the Case Study

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In order to fully understand the influence of dance practice on the process of this case study, the following chapter will focus on dance and its origins in history, the perception and role of the male body in dance practice and the connotations around males who dance within the context of the case study for this project.

### **Dance: Contextualised**

Dancer and choreographer Beth Dean (1966) states:

Dance is more than just ballet, ballroom, jive, [Charleston], TV or movie fare; it can be a highly evolved art form, or a spontaneous movement formed on the spur of the moment. Dance is thought made manifest through movement rhythms. Dance is a point of view in its styles, and a language in its forms and techniques. Dance techniques are in the grammars of movements that have been developed in various cultures... to dance is to confirm our deep association with the rhythm of life. (Dean, 1966: 8-9)

Dean explains that styles, forms and techniques are all factors which contribute to the classification of dance. For the purpose of this project, dance performance practices (as a site of learning and education) are what are being negotiated. The South African Independent Examinations Board (IEB) provides educators with a curriculum which all independent schools are required to follow. The curriculum refers to Laban's Movement Analysis as a broad topic; however there is no specific or compulsory focus on dance<sup>40</sup>, per se. It is therefore only Laban's philosophy around dance and movement which is provided as a suggestion, and anything that an educator may choose to do with his/her students is flexible. It is possible that Laban's philosophies are considered quite useful for the high school Dramatic Arts student as it teaches the students skills about body weight and using that weight to create movement. This can be translated into dramatic performance and character creation.

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<sup>40</sup> (<http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ngH3UDSp2Ag%3D&tabid=420&mid=1216> [Date accessed: 11 May 2014])



Most of the students involved in the project had never danced in a performance capacity before, and generally the experience that they had of dance was socially at parties or nightclubs. The concept of technical 'dance' of any kind was unknown to most of the students and this meant that a basis was required before creating any choreography at all. As I am trained in contemporary dance and have studied it at tertiary level, the basic principle of Laban's theory and Martha Graham's contraction and release was the foundational technique that I hoped the students would be able to master. The students were also exposed to some other performance skills such as warming up, stretching and focusing for performance.

Beth Dean suggests that "dance is a living history of man [sic]. It is both an art and an entertainment" (Dean, 1966: 9). It is the idea that any form of physical expression can be considered an art form as well as a form of entertainment which serves as a solid foundation for the following chapter. Dean says that "to the Westerner the word dance is synonymous with entertainment, either social or theatrical. Nevertheless, many of our own forms of dance have their origins far back in history and in sacred ritual" (Dean, 1966: 36).

## **Dance and the dancing male body: rethinking cultural hegemony in the dance education sector in South Africa**

In an introductory passage to her autobiography *Blood Memory*, American Modern Dance pioneer Martha Graham (1894-1991) writes:

I am a dancer. I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practising dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. In each it is the performance of a dedicated precise set of acts, physical or intellectual, from which comes shape of achievement, a sense of one's being, a satisfaction of spirit. One becomes in some area an athlete of God. (Graham, 1991:3)

Through considering Dance as a physical practice that is experienced through participation, it is evident that the students can become familiar with the concept of dance or movement.

### **1. Dance as physical practice and form of expression**

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the politics surrounding men and boys in Dance in order to analyse and interrogate the responses given in the interviews with the students about their involvement in the

project, and to understand how the theory and case study on which this research rests can be considered within this specific context. As previously suggested, 'dance' is a vast umbrella term that encapsulates a number of different forms of movement and styles. This may range from the educational dance and physical theatre (experienced by the class involved in the case study for this project), to a range of far more technical dance forms such as ballet and/or ballroom dancing.

Although the abovementioned quote was written by a pioneer of American Modern Dance, she suggests that there is a strong correlation between the body and the use thereof in order to communicate, to question and interrogate. Literature professor Andrew Hewitt (2005) in some more recent research discusses the social responsibility that dance has. He suggests that "the prevailing paradigm for art is performative" and considers the fact that the work itself is a "system of production" (Hewitt, 2005: 5). It is a more recent theory that dance has the capacity to grapple with difficult issues and topics which encourages thought, analysis and assessment from an audience. He comments on the body and the reading of it by an audience. He suggests that:

Bodies are not writing. This being said, however, they clearly do signify; the challenge is to understand how they do it. I seek to do so without locating "real" meaning elsewhere (i.e., in the realm of the social) and then tracing the ways in which bodies reference this external stratum of significance. (Hewitt, 2005: 8)

Through the participating students' communication of their thoughts around their identity as males, as adolescents, as Hilton College pupils, they were given the opportunity (via the medium of dance) to grapple with an idea or a perception that they felt needed to be addressed. Some of the students spoke about the use of dance as a means of communication in a positive way, as it not only challenges the performer (as they cannot rely on spoken text as they may in a scripted play, for example) as well as the audience as they are required to look, observe, extrapolate and assess/assign meaning. Learner 9 said that

I think a play with spoken text doesn't give you any room to develop your own opinion, whereas our dance piece, it was about finding your own identity and everyone can [sic] interpret it how you wanted, you could say it was masculine, you could say it was feminine, we had everything in it, and when you look back afterwards, every single person who'd looked at it had a different opinion and really, it almost brought out their own identity when they told you about it.

(Cox, 2015: Learner 9).

In a similar vein, when asked how performing a dance piece is different from a scripted play with spoken text, Learner 2 felt that

It's different, its' ... challenging...it's easier to sit and watch a play and just be...absorbed by what's happening... but this, it's something so foreign to people... it just challenges you to think...when you're watching dance, you're... trying to see what's being said in the dance. (Cox, 2015: Learner 2).

The students also learned this through their creation of the choreography, which is one of the most successful outcomes of involving the students in the process. It is experiential learning and the students gain a great deal from their engaging in this aspect of the work.

Theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski (1968), in his revolutionary text *Towards a Poor Theatre*, suggested that all that is required for a performance is the performer and the audience.

By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre... cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion. (Grotowski, 1968: 19).

If one translates this into the context of dance, wherever there is a dancer and someone who is observing the dance (be it a classmate, a teacher or a paying audience) it is a performance and can therefore be used to communicate and express. Graham (1974) suggested that "the function of the dance is communication. The responsibility that dance fulfil its function belongs to us who are dancing today" (Anderson, 1974: 165). Those who are 'dancing', I believe, encapsulates anyone who engages with the use of the body to perform planned or choreographed movement for a specific outcome. Dance researcher Judith Lynn Hanna (1983) states that "observers make inferences from or assign meaning to what they see" (Hanna, 1983: 7). This, in turn, suggests that with greater exposure to dance (whether in performance or educationally), more informed inferences about what is observed may be made by spectator and performer alike.

## **2. (Em)bodied Histories**

The body is therefore a multi-faceted and layered medium through which expression is achieved when dancing. Any person who engages in dance, as spectator, choreographer or performer, brings with themselves a history of past experiences and preconceived ideas and opinions. This also includes those aspects of our identity which we carry with us such as race and gender. South African dance writer and researcher Liane

Loots states that “our histories are written into our bodies” (Loots, 2010: 1). This is to be considered in the context of the students who participated in this case study.

The students who engaged in the process of creating and participating in the Hilton College *FUNK* programme entered into it with a great deal of prejudice, uncertainty and preconceived notions about what they are going to experience. Learner 13 shared his experience about how he felt when he first found out he was going to be performing in *FUNK*:

When you told us... the guys were just, like having fun and whatever, and then the time comes when... the process comes and you're actually like, oh, like, this is serious, and then people are buying tickets to come watch you, so you're like, okay. But then you obviously get those people that really stress out before that...There was a huge crowd, and people were scared...

(Cox, 2015: Learner 13)

Learner 2 also explained that he had “always wanted to do *FUNK*, ‘cause it looked cool, watching it from the earlier years” (Cox, 2015: Learner 2). Although many of the students have their own personal history that they bring, they also attend a *FUNK* performance in Grade 10 as a Dramatic Arts class and view the performance with the knowledge that they will be taking part the following year. This does build a great deal of suspense and expectation for the students, which is mostly positive and they do generally feel excited to participate. This is realised during a process of involvement in a project such as *FUNK*, as the participants engage the process whilst entering into it with a mixture of preconceived ideas, thoughts, feelings and experiences.

### **2.1. Performativity of gender/race/culture**

Along with individual ideas and notions that the students may have about the process before it even begins, gender, race and culture are also fundamental influences that impact on the way in which each individual engages in the experience. In an article regarding a performance by the South African and Durban-based Flatfoot Dance Company, Sarah Castelyn (2008) considers Ann Cooper Albright’s opinions on gender, race and culture, and the effects that these elements have on dance and choreography. She suggests that:

Examining the body and identity in contemporary dance, Ann Cooper Albright’s premise is that the dancing body is responsive (1997: xiii). She states how this responsive dancing body “engages with and challenges static

representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience". (Cooper Albright in Castelyn, 2008: 67).

Dancers and choreographer alike bring elements of themselves, their pasts and histories, personalities, prejudices and opinions to a dance work. The static representations of race and gender are "challenged" within contemporary dance, and the fact that they are such an integral part of everyday life, not only for South Africans but the world over, makes it all the more relevant. Within the process of *FUNK* this was definitely felt through the female researcher and the 13 male students who were taking part in the project. As I am trained in contemporary dance it is sometimes a challenge when students find certain movements difficult or are challenged by the simplest basic instruction. Their lack of experience however could not be a barrier to them learning and developing through the process.

This notion of the responsive body that investigates the relationship between the body and identity is further developed when Albright describes dance as containing a "double moment of representation in which bodies are both producing and being produced by the cultural discourses of gender, race, ability, sexuality, and age. (Castelyn, 2008: 67)

Here it is suggested that the dancing body is a *moving* and mobile one, and it therefore challenges the static representations of issues such as gender and race that society has become so accustomed to. The idea that the dancing body can investigate the "relationship between the body and identity" (Castelyn, 2008: 67) shows how it is possible that the dancing body represents certain stereotypes that society holds. This is fundamentally relevant to the process of Hilton pupils engaging in the creation and performance of a dance work. It is through their involvement that they challenge preconceived ideas about gender, masculinity and also about dance and their participation in it. It allows them the opportunity to do so from the very beginning in a safe and controlled environment, namely, their Drama classroom with their classmates who they know.

It also explores the idea that dance can be used as a form of non-verbal communication that is not hindered by the barriers of language. Castelyn considers the ideas of a "double moment of representation" and determines that

...the dancing body can be choreographed... to expose and question cultural codes and conventions surrounding the dancer's physical body; the dancing body makes visible the process of identity formation.

(Castelyn, 2008: 68).

Once again this suggests that the dancing body forms an imperative part of the identification of the self, and through either observing or taking part in contemporary dance theatre, so one can develop ideas and thoughts around their own identity. This connects with the ideas (discussed in Chapter One) of Judith Butler (1993), and her research around how the so-called 'performance' in performance involves and considers gender, race, and class. Liane Loots (2006) suggests that,

Cultural identity, as Stuart Hall (1990) has argued, is not something which is innate and which thus transcends time, history, location and context. It is in fact subject to a continuous interplay between culture and history and that these are themselves always discourses that negotiate power relations. (Loots, 2006: 89)

Arguably, Judith Butler and her theory around performativity is of a similar thread, within the context of dance, a similar engagement is experienced. As Castelyn states

Unlike most other cultural productions, dance relies on the physical body to enact its own representation. But at the very moment the dancing body is creating a representation, it is also in the process of actually forming that body. Put more simply, dancing bodies simultaneously produce and are produced by their own dancing. This double moment of dancing in front of an audience is one in which the dancer negotiates between objectivity and subjectivity – between seeing and being seen, experiencing and being experienced, moving and being moved – thus creating an interesting shift of representational codes that pushes us to rethink the experience of the body within performance. (Castelyn, 2008: 68)

This important aspect of the dancers' participation within the piece correlates with Butler's theory around performativity and how individuals 'perform' characteristics that are imposed upon us from the outside world. Although the performers are technically a representation in their performance, they are still noticed and recognised by those who may know them in the audience, for example. This adds a different dimension to the pressure that the performer feels and, more specifically, the students who engaged in this case study. Learner 5 said that

I don't think that the dancing was that challenging...I think... performing in front of a crowd and, especially girls, I think that was... [Interviewer: Girls you know or just... anyone?] Girls I know as well, and I think even my family. [Interviewer: Okay, why?] Like I...I don't know, I don't think my family would ever expect me to dance. [Interviewer: Were you scared they were going to judge you?] Not really, I just think I... [Interviewer: Just a new experience?] Ja. Like, I mean, I'm open and close with my family and then I joke around and I am who I am, but... I was just a bit nervous to perform. (Cox, 2015: Learner 5)

It was hoped that through the challenge of engaging in a form of communication that does not require spoken language, that the students will be able to reconsider this area of the creative arts, the challenges they encounter, and the realm of different opportunities that it provides. In connection with Butler's theory, it is also evident that the participants substantiate her claim that gender is realised through our performativity of it. The boys at Hilton College experience the years of their actualisation of their masculinity in a male-driven, patriarchal environment which reinforces gender norms and normative masculine practices. This also permits them many opportunities to fashion their desired 'masculinity' to suit various situations and encounters, as suggested by Connell in Chapter 1.

### **3. Gender in dance: The male dancing body**

One might feel distaste at macho displays of male energy on the dance stage... Or one might feel that male dancers are generally a disappointment —they just don't look very masculine. Or again one might feel that the ways in which one has seen masculinity represented in dance do not seem very relevant to one's own experience of class, race, gender, sexuality, etc. Then there are those who do enjoy watching male dance, and wish there were more male dancers around to watch. (Burt, 1995: 11)

Gender is represented and considered in dance on a number of levels. The dancing male body is perceived in various ways by the performer, the audience, the choreographer, the other performers and even the researcher, in the case of this study. All bodies are gendered and, in the context of dance, this plays a role in how each body is perceived. Particularly for the students who participated in this project, the preconceived notions that they may have had around the dancing body were brought with them into the rehearsal process. This arises from a history of femininity in dance, especially in Europe. Ramsay Burt, writing from a Northern based and European context, mentions "for much of the twentieth century, the dance world has tended to appear to be predominantly a feminine realm in terms of audiences, dancers and teachers" (Burt, 1995: 12).

When asked what sorts of people dance, Learner 6 said “I personally think anyone can dance... but I think there is a stereotype around people who do dance you know; guy’s dance is gay and whatever” (Cox, 2015: Learner 6). This connection with homosexuality will be addressed in the following section.

Within the realm of education, Liane Loots (1995) suggests that “the educational use of dance has the potential to provide a means of challenging the social expectations of women’s (and men’s) gendered physicality (Loots, 1995: 56). This is valuable when considering how the students’ use of dance actually contradicts, in a number of ways, what some of them may consider an activity that boys would partake in. Also through the specific choice of creating a physical theatre piece of dance that could showcase the boys’ strength and promote their physicality and, in turn, make them feel confident on the stage, this would break barriers for the students involved and hopefully shift their perceptions around what they understand about ‘dance’.

### **3.2.1. The element of homosexuality – The femininity of males who dance**

For many people, a key source of contemporary prejudice is the association between male dancers and homosexuality. It is certainly true that there are a lot of gay men involved in the dance world. Although by no means all male dancers are gay, this is what prejudice suggests. (Burt, 1995: 12)

This may be one of the most obvious misconceptions about the male dancer, specifically for the pupils who participated in the case study for this research. In their interviews the students spoke at length about their ideas that dance is supposedly ‘feminine’. Through further interrogation, it was also mentioned that the students do not feel that they know very much at all about dance and their frame of reference is rather limited. Of course, ballet can possibly be defined as a more feminine style of dance, however, as Learner 10 states

By society’s standards men should normally do hip-hop or something that looks more masculine, but personally I think whether you do ballet, krump or hip-hop, if you’re proud of dancing, that’s fine, you can do what you want to do. (Cox, 2015: Learner 10)

This student also referred to the fact that society defines what they understand to be ‘the norm’. For an adolescent who is still attending school, this shows the power and impact that society makes on these



individuals and their perceptions. When asked where he thinks the stereotype of the 'gay' ballet dancer came from, Learner 3 said "I'm actually not sure where it comes from. I think it might just be, just because there have been one or two guys who are gay who go and do ballet" (Cox, 2015: Learner 3). This underpins the statement that the students' frame of reference is generally somewhat limited in this aspect of the field of dance<sup>41</sup>.

In many ways the students make large generalisations because of one or two experiences they may have had without really knowing the context or understanding their assumptions. Learner 2 said that "ballet dancing, people's perception of people may be like, it's a stereotype but it's bad, but people kind of see that as a little bit queer" (Cox, 2015: Learner 2). Learner 5 stated that

I think male ballet dancers are stereotyped to be more feminine and weaker and you know, they are not seen as the more...ja, they're like, like a girl almost, whereas hip-hop you're more physical ... (Cox, 2015: Learner 5)

It is necessary too to unpack the use of the word 'gay'. In the interview with Learner 11, he was asked where he thinks the 'gay' generalisation comes from in the dance world:

Dancing is seen as a more of a feminine kind of thing, through the eyes of most boys. So seeing a guy dance is... I wouldn't say confusing...but... you have to process it more and think, okay, actually no, this is right, or...it comes as more of a shock, it's a bit abnormal to see a guy who you might know dancing, in comparison to going to Broadway and seeing a famous guy dance. [Interviewer: So the 'gay' thing, does [the word] mean homosexual?]It's just because it's a feminine thing to do. That's what people perceive it as. [Interviewer: So 'gay' as in less masculine, not 'gay' as in, you're going to go have sex with a man?] Gay meaning that it's a girl's thing to do rather than...play sport. [Interviewer: Okay, so it's like, not the masculine thing to do?] Ja, in a sense. [Interviewer: Is it less popular in that sense then, also?] I wouldn't say that it's less popular, ma'am, but it's just less thought about than most boys because obviously a lot of boys aren't offered it, so they don't really think of it as much. (Cox, 2015: Learner 11)

In the context of the students participating in this research it is more the idea of referring to something which is lesser as 'gay', without them really knowing the sexual connotation behind what they are saying. In other words, it has less to do with sexuality and more to do with the boys' perceptions around what is popular and

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<sup>41</sup> Race and cultural background are also important influences here. This opens up discussion around the fact that dance also has different roles within certain cultures as far as ritual and cultural practices are concerned, particularly when considering the role of the male in these practices. This is, however, not within the particular scope of this study and will therefore not be focused on in great detail.

what is not. The phrase “that’s so gay” is also a slang term that is used the world over. It generally arises from homophobic feelings and is described in the Oxford Dictionary as “Foolish, stupid, or unimpressive”<sup>42</sup>.

Ramsay Burt suggests that “one explanation of macho male display dance is sometimes surely that dancers are trying to show that they are not effeminate, where ‘effeminate’ is a code word for homosexual” (Burt, 1995: 12). This is a useful observation that can be linked to the boys participating in the *FUNK* choreography. The piece almost *has* to be extremely physical and allow the boys an opportunity to show their strength and the ability that they have with natural masculine physical brawn, as the boys feel more comfortable showing this representation of masculinity to the audience. Burt also suggests that

Dance is an area in which some of the holes in the construction of male identity can sometimes be revealed. It is argued that the unease that sometimes accompanies the idea of the male dancer is produced by structures which defend dominant male norms. (Burt, 1995: 14)

Noteworthy when considering this quote is the fact that even through the norms and conventions and embodied characteristics that each student arrived with to begin the process, he still participated and developed and changed throughout his involvement. The norms of toughness and strength are sometimes challenged in dance, yes, which was the purpose of this study: to challenge the students’ perceptions around masculinity in dance and how this could be renegotiated or considered differently.

Burt discusses the fact that the emotional aspect of the heterosexual male is something that is quite complex but is at the very core of what it means to be ‘a man’. He suggests that

It is sometimes said that white middle-class heterosexual men are less able to deal with or express a full range of feelings (including the ‘soft’ emotions that are associated with femininity) than women, black people, gays and others often designated ‘Other’. (Burt, 1995: 18)

As Judith Lynn Hanna suggests as quoted previously, the actual physical act of dancing allows for individuals to express thoughts, feelings and emotions. This may also sometimes cause the onlooker to judge in a negative way the fact that males are exposing this part of who they are. It connects closely to Kimmel’s (2008) idea of boys being prohibited from showing emotion or expressing how they feel. If one does show emotion, they are

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/gay> [Accessed 03 October 2015]

considered 'gay', as in, less masculine. Burt suggests that "an individual who does not conform to... behavioural norms... [is] in danger of being considered 'not to be a proper man', a euphemistic phrase that generally means homosexual" (Burt, 1995: 22). Therefore at the heart of calling someone "gay" or "fag" is the intention to denote weakness. It is the idea that they are behaving like a girl and therefore being gay, in heteronormative speak, concerns taking the lesser positions of a female in patriarchy.

### **3.3. DANCE AND ITS ROLE IN DRAMATIC ARTS AND THEATRE EDUCATION**

#### **1.1.1. Arts in Education in South Africa**

Arts education fits into the broader spectrum of education in South Africa through the White Paper on Arts and Culture (2012). Access to education for all South Africans is featured both in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The White Paper on Arts and Culture states that

The ministry will actively promote the Constitutional right of every learner in the General Education and Training Phase to access equitable, appropriate life-long education and training in arts, culture and heritage to develop individual talents and skills.<sup>43</sup>

The government's support in such an endeavour shows the value and importance of the arts in education, even though in the immediate context of the students at Hilton College it may not necessarily be viewed in the same way. The Arts have the capacity to develop other skills within the learners that are specific to these subjects, which is proved accurate through the interviews and discussions with the participants of the study. This is discussed in further detail below.

#### **1.1.2. Dramatic Arts – The platform for Dance education**

People... generally do not know how to make use of the physical apparatus with which nature has endowed [them]. The physical self is at the centre of a dramatic encounter and students in drama should be educated in how best to manipulate their 'instrument'. (Stanislavski in Taylor, 2000: 10)

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<sup>43</sup> ([http://www.dac.gov.za/white\\_paper.htm](http://www.dac.gov.za/white_paper.htm)) [Accessed 22 February 2012]

Although Dance is not available as an examinable subject at Hilton College, it does comprise part of the Dramatic Arts curriculum. Stanislavski in the abovementioned quote says that it is the physical being that is the centre of Drama, and it can be suggested that Dance is an extension of this. Learning how to use your body in dance can assist in all areas of practical work within the subject of Dramatic Arts. It is this aspect of education which contributes to that promised 'holistic education' as stated in the mission statement at Hilton College as mentioned in Chapter 1. Philip Taylor has written extensively around Drama in the classroom and the transformative nature of Drama. He suggests that

In drama praxis... we want our students to be able to manipulate the elements of their craft (people, passion and platforms), to understand how that manipulation works, so that audiences can appreciate and be transformed through the medium. (Taylor, 2000: 13)

It is through engagement with Drama that individuals learn about life, human nature and the world through their engaging in various texts and works, participating in discussions around various issues or ideas and creating their own work which challenges and addresses these as well. In considering the subject matter of that which is performed in Drama, this may expose certain truths and realities about the world around us. This, in turn, can lead to social reform and change in our world. In linking to the idea that dance can also lead to social reform, performer and choreographer Gregory Maqoma (2001) suggests that he sees "arts education and participation in arts and culture as the best way of improving the welfare of the people in this country" (Maqoma, 2001: 77). He suggests that if "young people are taught what arts are and how close arts are in tying our past to the present and how big the role they play in preparing us for the future [is] we would all be assured of a veritable and perpetual human coexistence in our lovely South Africa" (Maqoma, 2001: 77).

### **1.1.3. Dance in Education**

Within the IEB<sup>44</sup> and Education Department's curriculum specifications<sup>45</sup> there are a number of skills that learners are expected to have achieved by the end of each academic year. There are other sections which allow for choice by the teacher, and with Drama, Dance is one of these modules. In a boys' school it is common to teach physical theatre but dance, as in contemporary dance, is less common. To reiterate from Chapter 1, it must be considered what it is that allows boys to feel masculine and the fact that those are the

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.ieb.co.za/School/nsc curriculum/Dramatic%20Arts.pdf> [Accessed 03 October 2015]

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=hm%2FokVpsq0c%3D&tabid=570&mid=1558> [Accessed 03 October 2015]

activities favoured over those which are less masculine. It is important, first, to discuss dance and its place in education.

In her book *The Dance, and Its Place in Education*, American dance and education specialist Margaret H'Doubler (2000) suggests that:

The dance is peculiarly adapted to the purposes of education. It serves all the ends of education – it helps to develop the body, to cultivate the love and appreciation of beauty, to stimulate the imagination and challenge the intellect, to deepen and refine the emotional life, and to broaden the social capacities of the individual that he may at once profit from and serve the greater world without.

(H'Doubler in Ross, 2000: 9)

These comments are connected closely to the values of Hilton College, as the school aims to develop the whole individual. As discussed in the first chapter, “Hilton College... strives to provide a balanced educational experience”<sup>46</sup>. In this way it is clear how these skills that can be learned through dance can assist in developing South Africans who can work towards bettering our country as we contribute usefully to our society, as the values of the College are stated.

Through her analysis, H'Doubler attempted to draw links between the dance and education to support her claims about dance's 'place' in education. She believed in a new idea of “the expressivity of the body and the tightness of the links joining the emotional, physical, and intellectual aspects of the individual” (Ross, 2000: 7). This is perhaps the most relevant aspect of dance education at or within any educational institution, at any level. This is so, as it suggests that dance assists in developing more than merely the physical ability of the student, but the emotional and intellectual aspects as well. Janice Ross (2000) has also done extensive research in the field of dance and education as well as H'Doubler's work. She suggests that for H'Doubler and within her classroom “dance became a tool for bodily, kinaesthetic, and cognitive discovery.” (Ross, 2000: 7).

As previously mentioned, the body is the foundation of dance. In order to dance, one must use the body. Liane Loots states that “the body is the medium of expression in dance” (Loots, 1995: 51). This means that the body is the tool that is used in order to engage in dance. Each individual body comes with its own attributes and qualities. For some of the boys involved in this case study, this was a new experience for their bodies.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.hiltoncollege.com/mission-and-values.html> [Date accessed: 11 May 2014].

They often feel awkward and unsure as some of the movements do not come naturally to them. In their interviews, however, they listed what they felt they had gained during the process of creating the piece and performing it on stage in front of an audience. They stated things such as gaining confidence, doing something new that they would never have done voluntarily, using their bodies in new and different ways and being involved in a production for the very first time at 17 years of age. Liane Loots states that aside from all the other skills one learns while dancing, “it is great fun and allows for social interaction between different races, cultures, and genders that offers different ways of being in community” (Loots, 2006: 297). This is undoubtedly one aspect of the process of the *FUNK* project creation which was enjoyable for all of the students that participated in the project. As Learner 7 stated

The process was... a lot of fun. I think it was hard, but it definitely got our class to bond more, 'cause... we were in it together and... it was great to see how ...people, like, grew during the whole process, and I liked to watch that...we just grew together and helped each other through it. (Cox, 2015: Learner 7)

Dance within a boys' school comes with an entirely different plethora of issues. However, some of these are unrealistic and not always necessarily accurate. Ramsay Burt speaks about writers in the British “Men Against Sexism” movement magazine *Achilles Heel*. He states that they

...speak of men being emotionally illiterate while other writers speak of the social pressures on boys and men to be tough and insensitive. The argument is advanced that boys and men are denied opportunities to ‘get in touch with their bodies’, and these include social pressures for men not to dance. (Burt, 1995:14)

This is most certainly an aspect which affects the boys' opinion about Dance at Hilton College. Cooper Albright speaks about the contribution that dance can make in the aspect of communicating meaning through dance.

Although it is grounded in live human bodies (whose gender, race and ability immediately convey certain cultural messages about beauty, fitness, grace, etc.), dance carries the contributing possibility of being both very abstract, and very literal. Some movements will give an audience only vague physical sensations, while other movement gestures have unmistakeable meaning. Thus, dance can at once represent images that cite known cultural icons, as well as present physical states whose meanings are not so much visual as they are kinaesthetic. (Cooper Albright in Friedler & Glazer, 1997: 141-142)

### **Analysis of findings:**

In returning to the original aim of this study, it is and was to explore the performativity of gender and sexuality amongst adolescent males (16 to 18 years of age) from within the context of the subject specificity of the Dramatic Arts classroom at Hilton College (KZN), with a primary focus on (contemporary) dance. This is and was explored through interrogating and examining the way in which dance performance practices (as a site of high school learning and education) can function as a space in which young adolescent South African men are given the opportunity to engage and critically consider and/or reconsider their own masculinities as social/cultural constructions: an embodied enquiry into self.

The literature that forms the basis of this research established foundational theories around adolescent males, masculinity (and particularly that of adolescent males) and dance. Much of what was discussed around adolescent males and the way in which they negotiate and in turn 'perform' their masculinity (particularly in their school context) was reiterated in the interviews with the participants. They spoke at length about the pressures they face daily and how they function within the greater microcosm of Hilton College.

Through the interviews with the participants it is clear that their comments underpin Butler's theory of performativity as mentioned in Chapter 1. The interviews show how the students perform different roles and adopt different versions of themselves (and their masculinities) in order to fit certain situations. The boys are essentially learning to be boys in a male-driven environment, which reiterates Butler's idea that little of what we understand about gender is innate, but rather that it is realised through gendering practices and social constructions. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is through the actual *living out* of our gender, so our gender is defined. Their involvement in *FUNK* therefore provided the opportunity for the students to reconsider these imposed notions around gender, masculinity and their sexuality.

The students reiterated many points provided by writers such as Kimmel (2008) about the adolescent male and the way in which he negotiates his masculinity in the early teenage years. Many of the stereotypes that Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) mentioned in their study were reiterated in the interviews with the participants of this research, which provides some basis for the hypothesis that much of what they discovered in their Australian-based study would be of a similar vein here in South Africa. Many of the difficulties that the

students face as far as developing into young men is concerned are not specific to the South African context, evident in the responses in their interviews.

It was established in the interviews that the students felt that individuals who are not familiar with something tend to place judgement very quickly and with little knowledge to inform their opinions. It was notable that the students felt that they were better equipped to assess and evaluate Dance (in any form or style) since the completion of their Dance module in Dramatic Arts because they felt that they had more experience in doing so having had the exposure during the term. This could also apply to the students' perceptions around other areas of this study such as masculinity and dance. The boys find themselves within a specific environment which perpetuates hegemonic masculinity, and any thought which deviates from this is discouraged. This idea may therefore support the assertion that the Dramatic Arts classroom can allow the students an opportunity in which they are able to reconsider these norms and to challenge them in an environment where discussion and varying opinions are encouraged. It can also be suggested that it is also this environment that provides the students with an opportunity to broaden their perceptions around different issues and teach them about 'life', as Learner 1 mentioned in Chapter 3.

The students discussed the way in which Cultural activities are viewed at Hilton College and that there is a trend which is apparent that sport is seen in some ways as more important than other extra-curricular activities. It is important to note here that extra-curricular activities are done outside of academic time, and that even though *FUNK* is a performance which requires rehearsal outside of class time, it is still considered academic work by the students involved. Many of the students addressed the school's lax attitude towards the boys' involvement in the cultural life of the school, however sport is compulsory. This is therefore a perception that the boys are given where the school endorses sport and places more emphasis on it. It is therefore challenging to encourage boys to participate in these activities where there is less support from the institution in this regard.

The interviews with the students therefore provided insight into their opinions which underpins the purpose of this research. The students engaged willingly in the interview process and provided valuable information which reiterates many of the assertions made before the research began.



# Conclusion

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The performativity of masculinity amongst the participants is propagated through the patriarchal nature of Hilton College. Hegemonic masculinity is reiterated daily in the everyday running of the school and the students are expected to behave in a way that aligns with these ideals. As mentioned in Chapter 1 and reiterated in the students' responses in Chapter 3, the students are expected to show good moral conduct and uprightness, based on a long-running tradition of colonial principles. The students are discouraged from straying from these principles and individuality and freedom of thought or alternativeness is not permitted. In this way, the Dramatic Arts classroom allows the students a place in which they are free to express themselves in a variety of ways which may challenge these norms, and to share opinions which may also deviate.

The context of Hilton College as an all-boys' full-time boarding school has provided fertile ground for discussion with great depth in the interviews about the focal topics of this research, namely adolescent masculinity and dance within education. The discussion with the students around Cultural activities at Hilton College provides thorough background to what informs their perceptions around activities in the Arts versus all of the other activities that the students are involved in. It is clear that collectively they acknowledge the benefits of their own personal participation in such activities and feel that the school should encourage greater participation amongst the other students. It was mentioned that sport is seen as more important or valuable than culture (and even academics, according to some students), which illustrates why there is a particularly negative stigma linked to the boys' participation in cultural activities.

Some of the sport at Hilton College is also funded largely through the Hiltonian Old Boy Society, which therefore leads to much expectation from the coaches for the students to perform in their teams. There is no pressure of this nature within Arts and Culture, which also sheds some light on the perception of this area of the students' involvement at the College. The lack of pressure within the Arts may also explain the lack of interest these activities receive from the students.

The students also discussed how they have developed since choosing Dramatic Arts as a Grade 12 subject, and their responses are testament to the necessity that such an opportunity is for adolescents; and particularly adolescent males in this case. Some students addressed the sense of safety and comfort they feel in the classroom, which not only contributes to their academic performance but encourages their healthy emotional

and psychological well-being. In connection to using *FUNK* as an academic project, some students felt that it was preferable for all students in a Grade 11 class to participate as it encourages them to do something which they may not have voluntarily chosen to do themselves. The students noted that they would not have predicted that they would benefit as much as they did and they may have resisted from the very beginning, and possibly even have opted out. Some of the students mentioned that their participation in *FUNK* did not make them feel less masculine, but a few noted that they felt more masculine participating as they felt that it required courage to perform on the stage in front of a large audience which they thought some of their peers may not have been willing to do. The sense of pride that the students felt in participating in the piece also seemed to be surprising for some, as they had not anticipated that it would be – in any way at all – an enjoyable experience for them.

The students mentioned in their interviews that through their involvement in *FUNK* as well as the other tasks in their Dance module in Drama, they have gained perspective on the world of dance which they did not have prior. A number of them commented that there is a stigma around male dancers which is that they are 'gay' or not masculine enough, however this was generally linked to the style of dance that male dancers engage in. They mentioned that ballet is not always perceived as masculine, whereas a male hip-hop dancer is dancing to popular music and doing movements which clearly require strength and stamina. Through performing in *FUNK* some of the students spoke about how they have gained respect for dancers, as they did not realise the level of commitment and focus that is required in dance performance. Some of the students pointed out that in many cases, particularly amongst their friends; individuals place judgement on something without much knowledge or understanding of it. One of the students mentioned that he feels he is now better equipped to assess and appreciate dance, as he feels that he has had more exposure and learnt skills which will assist him in this endeavour. This lack of exposure is heightened and reinforced by the patriarchal and colonial nature of Hilton College.

It was originally hoped that dance would be explored as the possibility of a go-between or transgressive space for the participants in the study to reconsider their perceptions around masculinity, and to consider their own masculine identities during the process. Ironically, even though this may have been achieved in some ways, there were many choices that were made by the researcher with the students' hegemonic and masculine ideals in mind. These came in the form of using the term 'physical theatre' instead of dance to encourage the students to participate, by running workshops with male dance teachers to expose the students to an aspect

of the field (generally unknown to them) which challenged their own understanding of the male dancer, as well as consciously creating choreography and movement which permitted the students to use their physical strength and innate courage and bravery in lifting and use of body weight. In some ways this actually perpetuates the need that many of the boys have to be perceived as strong, masculine and 'big' (as referred to in Chapter 1).

As mentioned in Chapter 4, in connection with Butler's theory, it is also evident that the participants substantiate her claim that gender is realised through our performativity of it. The boys at Hilton College experience the years of their actualisation of their masculinity in a male-driven, patriarchal environment which reinforces gender norms and normative masculine practices. This also permits them many opportunities to fashion their desired 'masculinity' to suit various situations and encounters, as suggested by Connell in Chapter 1. The idea that this 'gendered' behaviour is not constant but ever-changing connects to the open platform which was created by the students' involvement in *FUNK*. It was hoped that this medium of performance would allow the students a go-between in which they could reconsider their own ideas around gender and masculinity. The interview responses from the boys reiterated the patriarchal nature of the school and the fact that 'dance' itself carries varying connotations amongst adolescent boys. It was clear that *FUNK* in itself was something very different for a number of the students to involve themselves in and this enabled an opportunity for them to reconsider some stereotypes and generalisations around dance.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this is in direct correlation with the assertion that the boys' perceptions around masculinity and patriarchy are reinforced by their consistent contact with other males (schoolboys and staff) and how this daily reiteration affects their thinking around gender. It can be reiterated that Butler states that "to understand identity as a *practice*, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effect of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of life" (Butler in Kirby, 2006: 44). Some of the students alluded to the fact that their masculinity is malleable and can be altered and changed in various situations which links to Butler's assertion that identity is 'practice'. Through the *FUNK* process the students were able to engage in something which they may have considered less masculine, or even less popular, and through their involvement they were permitted the opportunity to challenge, question and reconsider aspects of their masculinity which they may not have beforehand.

In saying this, some of the boys shared opinions in their interviews about the gym culture within Hilton College and the desire to be 'big' and strong is even considered obsessive in some cases (see Chapter 2). It is questionable therefore to what extent the boys actually 'reconsidered masculinity' per se, as their experience of *FUNK* was structured in a specific way to encourage their buy-in, ownership of the piece and participation therein. It is clear that, as Kimmel (2008) suggests in his text *Guyland* (see Chapter 1), the years in which a boy becomes a man are perilous indeed, and the perception that others have of the boys is important. The students may have been less interested in participating had the piece and the style of dance been, for example, softer and more feminine (as Burt (1995) suggests in Chapter 2).

The students communicated in their interviews that dance, in the greater scheme of this loose and non-prescriptive term, carries with it a connotation of something different from the norm (especially within an all-boys' school) which is therefore considered less popular. Through their involuntary participation in the piece they engaged in an experience which may not have necessarily been something the participants would have chosen to do. It is clear; however, through discussion in the interviews that each participant felt that they had developed in some way or gained skills (such as greater confidence in performance, breathing and relaxation technique and the use of the body for expression) that would be able to assist them further. Particular mention was made of how the skills of focus and improvisation and the use of their bodies to communicate meaning have assisted them in Dramatic Arts practical assessments since *FUNK*.

One of the aims of this study was to encourage an embodied enquiry into the self for each participant involved. Through considering identity as the topic of the *FUNK* piece, from the beginning of the process the students were rethinking and reconsidering stereotypes, generalisations and labels that they encounter as Hilton College boys – especially as this relates to their growing sense of 'becoming men' in contemporary South Africa. It was through this consistent addressing of the topics that the students were equipped to engage in a thorough and thought-provoking interview process with the researcher. The value of dance within education in this context (and in South Africa) is immeasurable, as the ground for focus on important topical issues is provided, and through a very specific medium.

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# Appendices

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## **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

### PART 1

#### Drama

1. What led you to choosing Drama as a Matric subject?
2. Did your parents have any say in whether or not you studied Drama? If they did, what was their opinion on you choosing the subject?
3. How has your experience of Drama been thus far?
4. Are you happy you decided to do Drama?

#### Hilton

1. In your opinion, what does it mean to be a Hilton boy?
2. Do you think that the school encourages you to become a well-rounded individual, or do you think that the school favours certain things over others, or certain skills over others?
3. Do you feel that there is a great deal of pressure on you as a Hilton boy to fit a certain bill or prescribed stereotype?

#### Dance

1. Have you ever danced before?
2. If yes, what dance have you done?
3. What sorts of people do you think dance? Is there a specific type of person that dances or can anyone do it?
4. How much do you know about the different styles of dance that can be explored?
5. Do you think that dance is only suitable for girls?
6. What is your perception of boys who dance?
7. Do you think that the style of dance has anything to do with what is acceptable or not? For example, a male ballet dancer vs. a male hip-hop or break dancer?

### PART TWO:

#### DANCE/FUNK

1. You have done a few dance-related activities in Drama this term. What were they?
2. How did you feel about participating in these activities?
3. Were there any that you really didn't enjoy? If yes, why?
4. Did you have a favourite activity? If so, specify which and state why?
5. Did you expect that you would experience dance the way that you have through your involvement in it thus far?
6. Do you think that dance is an important aspect of the Drama curriculum? Explain why or why not.
7. We have begun working on our *FUNK* choreography. How has this process been thus far?
8. What has been most challenging for you, personally?
9. Is there anything that you have found particularly easy?
10. How do you think the rest of the class is handling the process?
11. Do you think that as a class, we will be able to create a good piece and ultimately perform confidently on the stage?

#### PART THREE:

Earlier in the year you participated in the *FUNK* programme, hosted at Hilton College.

1. What was your first thought when you found out that your class would be participating?
2. Did your opinion of dance and dancers change during the process of creating the work?
3. How did your friends (other than your classmates) react when you told them you would be performing a dance piece in a show?
4. Do you think that the way in which other boys perceive you on the sports field is in any way affected by seeing you perform in a dance show?
5. What was your favourite part of the experience (be honest!)?
6. What was your least favourite part of the experience (be honest!)?
7. What do you think you learnt through the process of creating the piece and performing in the Theatre?
8. Would you do it again? Give reasons for your answer.

#### PART 2:

1. The piece spoke about identity and the way in which you are perceived at Hilton College. Do you think this is an important issue to address in front of an audience?
2. What do you think the purpose was of using this idea as the topic for a dance piece? How does it differ from a play with spoken text?
3. Do you think that playing contact sport such as rugby is in any way connected to how masculine you feel?
4. From a perspective of feeling 'masculine', did your involvement in *FUNK* make you feel more or less masculine, or neither?
5. Do you think that using *FUNK* as a Grade 11 project is a good idea? Substantiate your answer.
6. What do you think you have learnt/gained or how have you developed throughout the process of being involved in *FUNK*?
7. Was the experience different or similar to other cultural activities that you have been involved in, and how so?